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LEIGH HUNT AS ESSAYIST AND CRITIC

BY  
ALBERT FRANCIS TRAMS  
A. B. University of Illinois 1905

THESIS  
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH  
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY  
OF ILLINOIS, 1922

URBANA, ILLINOIS





1922  
T68

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

May 31 1922

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY  
SUPERVISION BY Albert Francis Trams

ENTITLED Leigh Hunt as Essayist and  
critic

BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE OF Master of Arts

Stuart P. Sherman  
In Charge of Thesis

Stuart P. Sherman  
Head of Department

Recommendation concurred in\*

Jacob Zeitlin

Committee

on

Final Examination\*

\*Required for doctor's degree but not for master's

499043





## PREFACE

We who have no stomach for the "defeatist" idea of life as portrayed in many books current today, passing tomorrow, and extinct the day after, may find pleasant relief in the life and writings of Leigh Hunt. After Butlerizing, Mastersizing, and Andersonizing sufficiently to satisfy ourselves that we have come short of the glory of making ourselves smug, not because we have sinned too much, but because we have not sinned wickedly, grossly, nor enough, we may flush the castor-oil effects from our palates with the tonic Huntian remedy against the "All is well that ends ill."

Then, whether at work or at play in the world of literature and life, we shall, I am sure we will, decide that there is neither pleasure nor profit in spending all our time with weeds and stones, with worms, and thorns, and poison ivy. Flowers shall sometimes lure our feet down field-paths growing dusky in the distance; birds calling to birds will quicken memories of old haunts far down in the twilight of forest glades; forgotten gateways will invite us to the Burial-grounds of Genius overhung with quietness and the peace of the Past. Thorn-prick and stone-bruise will undoubtedly be ours along the way, but only because we are unwary. They are but accidents by the way. Happiness, however, is not accident, neither is content; they, and comfort, will come only in the wake of striving and serving. All these came to Hunt because he strove and served. He had his share of thorn-prick and stone-bruise, for he too was unwary. But his largest portion by far was happiness, and

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content, and comfort; for he had the rare mind, the sweet soul, the striving spirit. And to him who comes asking he will reveal the secret of his own satisfaction.

Leigh Hunt as a subject for investigation was first suggested to me by Professor Stuart P. Sherman of the University of Illinois. I have him to thank for the pleasure that has come to me as a result of my study. For helpful suggestions during the early stages of the work I am indebted to Professors H. S. V. Jones and Harry G. Paul, also of the University of Illinois. I wish also to acknowledge my indebtedness to Miss Mary Spangler, Librarian of the Joliet Township High School for reading the entire manuscript.

I am especially glad to record my gratitude to Luther A. Brewer of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, for his kindness in giving me much side-light information about Leigh Hunt, and for allowing me to examine, and to make use of many rare volumes, and both published and unpublished manuscripts of Leigh Hunt. Several of the most interesting of these I have described in the addendum.

Joliet, Illinois

May 10, 1922





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## LEIGH HUNT: BIOGRAPHICAL

Youth and education. Dramatic criticism.  
Editorial work. In prison. Poetical works.  
The "Liberal" and Italy. Back home. "Lord  
Byron and Some of His Contemporaries." Fi-  
nancial relief. Publications. Death.

1784 James Henry Leigh Hunt was born at Southgate, near London, October 19, "cradled," he tells us, "not only in the lap of Nature, which I love, but in the midst of the truly English scenery which I love beyond all other." His father was a native of Barbadoes, who, after practicing law in Philadelphia, came to London and gained a reputation as a preacher. For some time he acted as tutor to a Mr. Leigh, after whom the subject of the present study was named. The father had no more capacity to manage money affairs than his son. He went through the Bankruptcy Court, and died (1809) a poor man, at the age of fifty-seven. Leigh Hunt's mother was the reverse of his father in character. Judged by Leigh Hunt's description, his father was a social animal. His mother, he tells us, had two accomplishments: "a love of Nature and of books... She was diffident in her personal merit, but had great energy of principle." From his father he inherited the incapacity to manage money matters, from his mother the capacity to make sacrifices for a principle.

Dr. Samuel Johnson died, December 13.





- 1785 Thomas Marton became Poet Laureate. "The Daily Universal Register" was established January 1. (This became "The Times" in 1788). John Wilson (Christopher North) was born.
- 1788 Marianne Kent (afterwards (July 3, 1809) Mrs. Leigh Hunt) was born. Lord Byron was born.
- 1791 Leigh Hunt entered Christ Hospital at the age of seven. Of it he says, "Christ Hospital is a nursery of tradesmen, merchants, of naval officers, of scholars; it has provided some of the greatest ornaments of their time... In point of University honors it claims to be equal with the best."
- 1791 Coleridge left Christ Hospital and was entered on the books of Jesus College, Cambridge, as Sizar. J. Wesley died. Boswell published his "Life of Dr. Johnson."
- 1792 Shelley born at Field Place, near Horsham, Sussex, August 4. Sir Joshua Reynolds died.
- 1794 Coleridge and Southey hatch the scheme of Pantisocracy, which was to take them to America as pioneers in a socialistic existence of equality and fraternity.
- 1795 Carlyle born. Keats born, October 31. Boswell died.
- 1796 Burns died. MacPherson died. Coleridge married Sarah Fricker (part of the Pantisocracy scheme).
- 1797 Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (afterwards second wife of Percy Bysshe Shelley) was born at London, August 30.
- 1798 Coleridge travelled in Germany. Publication of the "Lyrical Ballads."
- 1799 Hunt Left Christ Hospital. "I was fifteen," he says, "when I put off my band and blue skirts for a coat and neckcloth. I was then first Deputy Grecian, and I had the honour of





going out of the School in the same rank, and for the same reason, as my friend Charles Lamb. The reason was that I hesitated in my speech. It was understood that a Grecian was bound to deliver a public speech before he left the School, and to go into the Church afterwards; and as I could do neither of these things, a Grecian I could not be."

1800 Cowper died. Macaulay was born. Joseph Warton died.

1801 He left school with the purpose of spreading the pleasures of literature, of resisting tyranny, of diminishing superstition, of writing poetry. The last of these purposes was made manifest in the publication of his first printed book, "Juvenilla." He also contributed to the "Juvenile Library," and to the "European Magazine" he contributed a little poem called "Melancholy."

1801-11 Contributed several poems during 1801, 1805-11, to the "Poetical Register."

1802 Contributed to "The Monthly Preceptor" an article which attracted the attention of one, Elizabeth Kent, who asked a mutual friend, John Robertson, to introduce the author of it to her. Leigh Hunt was brought to the house, and there he met Marianne, Elizabeth's sister, who afterwards became his wife.

1803-08 Sometime before this (nobody seems to give the date) Leigh Hunt and Marianne had fallen into a misunderstanding, and the engagement had been broken off; but through the help of Elizabeth the engagement was renewed about April, 1803. At the time of the reconciliation Leigh Hunt was clerking in his lawyer brother Stephen's office.





- 1804-05 While still clerking for his brother he began contributing his first prose essays to the "Traveller." All of them reflected his admired models, Goldsmith, Fielding, Smollett, and Voltaire. The essays were signed, "Mr. Town Junior, Critic and Censor-general." ("Mr. Town, Critic and Censor-general" was the pen name of the authors of the "Connoisseur", one of the chipmunk magazines in imitation of the "Spectator.")
- 1805 About this time he left his brother's office for a place in the War Office, a place secured for him by Mr. Addington.
- 1805-07 While still in the War Office he began his career as theatrical critic. There were two periods, the first from 1805 to 1813, and the second from 1830 to 1832. From 1805 to 1807 he contributed criticisms of the stage and actors to "The News," a paper set up by his brother John. These criticisms appeared in book form in 1807.
- 1806 John Stuart Mill was born.
- 1806 Edited "Classic Tales." These were published in fifteen parts. Bound in five volumes; the first dated 1806, and the others 1807. According to Alexander Ireland, they were all dated 1807.
- 1807 Contributed theatrical criticisms to "The Times" (established in 1801) Hunt's friend, Barnes became editor in 1807.
- 1808-21 While still at work in the War Office, he became editor of the "Examiner," the first number of which is dated January 3, 1808. In order to give his full time to his new duties he resigned his position in the War Office, December 26, The "Examiner", of which his brother John was proprietor,





was an outspoken radical journal. Its chief aims were, reform in parliament, liberality of opinion in general, and "fusion of literary taste into all subjects whatsoever." Hunt states that "It began with no party; but reform soon gave it one." With a policy like that it was bound to get into trouble.

1808 The first bout of the "Examiner" with the government came over a comment in the "Examiner" concerning the case of Major Hogan, which had to do with bribery in obtaining promotion in the army. The prosecution fell through.

1809 Now that Leigh Hunt had steady employment with the "Examiner" he thought it fit to establish a home of his own. He and Marianne were married July 3. Hunt's son, Thornton, describes Marianne as a "bride the reverse of handsome, and without accomplishments; but she had a pretty figure, beautiful black hair which reached down to her knees, magnificent eyes, and a very unusual natural turn for the plastic art. She was an active and thrifty house-wife." She soon became an invalid; but hers was a resolute spirit, bearing up uncomplainingly under every adversity. During the first two years the young couple lived at Beckenham, Kent. In October of this year occurred the second prosecution of the "Examiner." But again it escaped.

1809 This was the "marvelous year"--of births. Among those of note who were born are the following: Tennyson, Gladstone, Darwin, Lincoln, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Edward Fitzgerald, Nikolai Gogol, Franz Joseph Haydn, Frances Anne Kemble, Poe, O.W. Holmes, Mrs. Browning, Chopin, Calvin.



1809 Leigh Hunt's father died.

1810-12 Hunt became editor of the "Reflector," a literary quarterly ventured by his brother John. It was much the same in nature and in creed as the "Examiner." It contained the first version of "The Feast of the Poets;" and in the final installment appeared "A Day By the Fire," which Mr. Kent characterizes as "light and frothy as a whipped syllabub." It is perhaps the most characteristic of those colloquial essays in the writing of which Leigh Hunt stands alone. The "Reflector" was discontinued after the fourth number.

1811 But trouble was brewing for the Hunts. John Scott had written an article against flogging, and the Hunts quoted it in the "Examiner." For this they were prosecuted the third time. Again they were acquitted, but for the last time. It was during this year that Hunt first resided at Hampstead, where he remained until his prosecution in 1813.

1812 Robert Browning was born. Dickens was born. Horne Tooke died.

1813-15 The article for which Leigh Hunt and his brother John were prosecuted, appeared in the Examiner for March 12, 1812. They were fined 500 pounds each and sentenced to separate gaols for two years (from February 3, 1813 to February 3, 1815). This imprisonment was unfortunate for Leigh Hunt so far as his health was concerned; but so far as making himself known, and gaining friends, a better way could not have been devised. He was regarded as a martyr. Among those who visited him were Moore, Byron, Hazlitt, Charles and Mary Lamb, Pitman, Mitchell, Barnes, and Bentham; and he corresponded with his "friend of friends," Shelley, won the ad-





miration of Keats, and made his position as the protector of liberty secure. It was not long before his family was allowed to remain with him in prison. He kept a garden, grew flowers, beautified the walls of his rooms with pictures, installed a pianoforte, entertained his friends, wrote poetry and prose, edited the "Examiner," and enjoyed, except for ill health, two of the happiest years of his life. Here was born his eldest daughter Mary Florimel (afterwards Mrs. Gliddon)

1815 Hunt left prison February 3, and went to reside at Edgware Road, where he was visited by Byron and Wordsworth. Wordsworth's solemnity stood in the way of a full understanding between Hunt and himself. Says Hunt, "there are good-humoured warrants for smiling which lie deeper even than Mr. Wordsworth's thoughts for tears." They did not meet again for thirty years.

1816 Hunt removed to Hampstead (in the Vale of Health, as Hunt called it) for the benefit of the air. Here he was frequently visited by Shelley. The exact date of their first meeting has not been ascertained, but it was probably sometime between March, 1812, and February, 1813. The lasting friendship was cemented during the trials connected with the suicide of Shelley's first wife, Harriet, and the proceedings instituted by Shelley to obtain possession of his children after Harriet's death. Hunt gave Shelley as much sympathy and support during it all as it is possible for one fellow being to extend to another whom all the world has deserted. This was also, according to the best evidence





obtainable, the year, probably the winter, in which Hunt met Keats.

- 1817 In this year Hunt left Hampstead for Lisson Grove North, where he resided at No. 13. He did not remain long.
- 1818 After leaving Lisson Grove, he resided at 8, York Buildings, New Road. It was here, according to Hunt, that he first met Keats; but Hunt is probably wrong.
- 1819 Hunt became editor of "The Indicator," (October 13, 1819 to March 31, 1821) the "most racy and delectable of all his periodicals." During this year he began "The Literary Pocket-Book, (1819-1822) an annual intended "to furnish a pocket memorandum book for intellectual observers and persons of taste." Percy Hunt born.
- 1819 Percy Florence Shelley born, at Florence, Italy, November 12.
- 1820 While residing at 13, Mortimer Terrace, Kentish Town (April 6 to August 23) Keats was moved to Hunt's home to be nursed in his all but final illness. Unfortunately a misunderstanding arose. Keats accused Hunt of breaking a seal on a letter addressed to himself from Fanny Brawne. Keats left in anger, but later found out that he had accused Hunt unjustly. They became somewhat reconciled. In September of the same year Keats left for Rome with Severn. The Prince Regent, whom the Hunts had libeled(?) becomes George IV.
- 1821 Hunt removes to the Vale of Health, Hampstead. On November 15 he and his family, at the request of Shelley and Byron, set sail for Italy, where Hunt is to become editor of a new magazine, "The Liberal," planned by Byron and Shelley. The



boat on which the Hunts set sail was overtaken by storms and bad weather and compelled to lay over at Ramsgate for three weeks. They sailed again, and reached Dartmouth with great difficulty. From there they went to Plymouth, where they had to remain until May 13, 1822. While at Plymouth, Hunt, "the privatest of all public men," found himself complimented to his pleasurable embarrassment by the presentation of a silver cup by some friends of the "Examiner."

1821 Keats died, February 23.

1822 Leigh Hunt, his wife and seven children, again sailed for Italy, May 13. They arrived at Genoa in June. On the 28 they sailed for Leghorn and landed there on July 1. Seven and one half months from London to Leghorn! (Those who are superstitious, may find cause for Hunt's misfortune in the recurrence of the figure 13 in many of his undertakings) The voyage had been undertaken with a good deal of hope and fear. Upon his arrival in Italy, Hunt called on Byron at Monte Nero. After his return from the visit to Byron, Shelley, who was living in Villa Magna, Lerici, came to see him. Together they went to Pisa, which was the town abode both of Shelley and Byron. By previous agreement it had been arranged that Hunt should occupy the ground floor of Byron's house, the Casa Lanfranchi. After Shelley had seen Hunt well settled, he, together with his friend Captain Williams, and a seaman named Charles Vivian, set sail on the return to Lerrichi. All three occupants of the boat were drowned. Shelley's body was cremated August 16. The ashes were preserved and buried in the Protestant Cemetery at Rome--the





spot of which Shelley had written, "It might make one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place."

1822-23 Hunt edited "The Liberal," which ceased publication after the fourth number.

1823 After the death of Shelley, Byron's interest in "The Liberal" waned, and Hunt was left to struggle with it alone. The sales fell off, and the "Liberal" was finally abandoned. After Byron left for Greece, July 13, Hunt left Genoa for Florence. He lived mainly at Maiano, about two miles from the city, on the Fiesolan Hills. It was here that Hunt made the acquaintance of Landor. His favorite son, Vincent, was born at Albaro. Hunt, at this time, was supporting himself by contributions to the "Literary Examiner," and other periodicals.

1824 Leigh Hunt and his brother John had a misunderstanding about the proprietary rights in "The Examiner." Except for this slight misunderstanding (serious for the time) the two brothers were greatly devoted to each other throughout their lives. Lord Byron died at Missolonghi, Greece, March 19.

1825 From Maiano, where he had spent "a very disconsolate time," Hunt and his family set sail for England, September 10. He arrived in London, October 14, and settled down for steady, but not very lucrative work, at Highgate.

1826 Leigh Hunt's old enemy, Gifford, died.

1827 Swinburne Hunt, aged about 7, died.

1828 Resided at Epsom. Incurred the ill-will of Byron's admirers by publishing "Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries."





- 1828 Edited the "Companion." January 9 to July 23, similar in contents to the "Indicator." It ran through 28 numbers.
- 1830-32 Resided at Brompton. After the failure of "The Companion," Hunt started, June 5, the "Chat of the Week"; after the seventh number the weekly was enlarged, and because it printed what was characterized as "news", it became subject to the stamp tax. But this it could not afford, so it was changed to a daily, and became "The Tatler." Hunt wrote almost the entire paper himself from September 4, 1830 to February 13, 1832. The work undermined his health permanently. It was after the failure of "The Tatler" that he wrote, "If you ask me how it is that I bear up under all this, I answer, that I love nature and books, and think well of the capabilities of human kind. I have known Shelley, I have known my mother." George IV was succeeded by William IV. Hazlitt died.
- 1831 Resided at Elm Tree Road, St. John's Wood
- 1832 Resided at 5, York Buildings, New Road . Granted 200 pounds out of the Royal Bounty. Walter Scott died.
- 1833-40 Resided at 4, Upper Cheyne Row, Chelsea, till 1840. Of the neighborhood Hunt says, "the air was so refreshing, and the quiet of the 'no-thoroughfare' so full of repose, that although our fortunes were at the very worst, and my health almost at a piece with them, I felt for some weeks as if I could sit still forever, embalmed in silence."
- 1834-35 Established "Leigh Hunt's London Journal." The object of this, according to Hunt, was, "to put more sunshine into the feelings of our countrymen, more good-will and good humour, a greater habit of being pleased with one another and with



everything.

- 1834 Coleridge and Charles Lamb died. Wm. Morris died.
- 1837-38 Editor of the "Monthly Repository."
- 1837 Accession of Queen Victoria.
- 1840-51 Resided at 32, Edwardes Square, Kensington.
- 1840 Madame D'Arblay died. Austin Dobson and Thomas Hardy born.
- 1843 Southey (poet-laureate) died. Macaulay suggested Leigh Hunt for the laureatship, but Wordsworth succeeded Southey.
- 1844 A pension of 120 pounds a year was offered him by Sir Percy Shelley, and accepted. T. Campbell died.
- 1847 Through the efforts of Lord John Russell, Macaulay, and Carlyle, Hunt was granted an annual pension of 200 pounds. Previous to this he had enjoyed two separate grants of 200 pounds each, one from William IV, and the other from Queen Victoria. Shortly before the grant of the Royal pension, Dickens had put on foot the project for the performance of "Every Man in His Humour," for Hunt's benefit. Among those interested in the scheme were Dickens, Forster, Leech, Mark Lemon, Cruikshank, Talfourd, Bulwer Lytton, Douglas Jerrold, and George Henry Lewes. From the performances Hunt realized about 400 guineas. Mary Lamb died.
- 1848 Hunt's brother John died, September 7. Emily Bronte died.
- 1849 Edgar A. Poe, Hartley Coleridge, and Maria Edgeworth died.
- 1850-51 Hunt became editor of "Leigh Hunt's Journal," December 7, and continued editor until March 29, 1851, when it ceased publication. Wordsworth died. Hunt became a candidate for the poet laureatship, but withdrew in favor of Tennyson
- 1851 Resided at 2, Phillimore Terrace, Kensington. Made a visit





to Ewell for the benefit of Vincent's health. Hunt himself was very ill at this time. Mrs. Shelley (Mary) died.

1852 Resided at 7, Cromwell Road, Hammersmith. Here he lived the rest of his days. Hunt and his friends suffered annoyance by the general recognition of himself as the original of Harold Skimpole in Dickens's novel "Bleak House." The character cast a slur upon his honesty. It was unjust, and unjustifiable. But Dickens maintained that he had intended no slur, had not dreamed, in fact, that the less desirable qualities of Harold Skimpole would be attributed to Leigh Hunt. Vincent Hunt died. The death of this youngest, and favorite son, affected Leigh Hunt very deeply. Thomas Moore died.

1857 Mrs. Leigh Hunt died. Her death made him feel "to belong as much to the next world as to this."

1859 From January 15 to August 20, he contributed 15 papers to "The Occasional" in "The Spectator." He had almost completed the final revision of his "Autobiography" when he died at Putney, August 28, aged 74 years and 10 months. Sweetness of temper, indomitable love and forgiveness, pious hilarity, and faith in the ultimate triumph of good, are the humane and noble qualities for which we love Leigh Hunt.

\*\*\*\*\*

In accordance with the wish Leigh Hunt had often expressed, he was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery, of which he had said, in connection with the burial there of his son Vincent, "my own final bed-chamber, I trust, in this world, towards which I often look in





my solitary walks, with eyes at once most melancholy, yet consoled."

On October 19, 1869, a monument to Leigh Hunt was inaugurated by Lord Houghton. The fund had been started at the suggestion of S. C. Hall, and been subscribed to by a large number of admirers and friends, both in England and America. Among those who had contributed were Robert Browning (Chairman), John Bright, Thomas Carlyle, Charles Dickens, Lord Houghton, Lord Lytton, John Ruskin, Earl Russell, B. W. Proctor, Sir Percy Shelley, Alfred Tennyson, and C. S. Hall. According to Thornton Hunt, the monument consists of a pedestal decorated with the design of a "Jar of Honey," and surmounted with a bust of the essayist, executed by Mr. Joseph Durham, A. R. A. The inscription contains the fourteenth line of his poem, best known of all, "Abou Ben Adhem":

"WRITE ME AS ONE WHO LOVES HIS FELLOW MEN."



## II

## ATTITUDES AND TENDENCIES

The spirit of Hunt's work: warmth, geniality, acuteness, vigor. His wide reading and catholicity of taste. The two-fold nature of his writings: creative and critical.

Ask who Leigh Hunt was, and those whom you question will invariably answer: "Leigh Hunt? Oh, yes, I know him; he's the man who wrote that poem about 'Abou Ben Adhem.'" And if, among those whom you ask, there happens to be a lover of "vers de societe", he may venture, "Yes, and didn't he write that little rondeau,

'Jenny kissed me when we met,  
 Jumping from the chair she sat in;  
 Time, you thief, who love to get  
 Sweets into your list, put that in;  
 Say I'm weary, say I'm sad,  
 Say that health and wealth have missed me,  
 Say I'm growing old, but add,  
 Jenny kissed me.'"

Knowledge concerning Leigh Hunt and his writings does not extend very far beyond the hazy information about the two poems just mentioned. Once in a rare while the response to the question will include "The Glove and the Lions." This is not as it should be. For Leigh Hunt at his best is worth knowing; and his best is not in his poems, but in his essays and in, what we may call for the want of a better term, his criticisms.

The Hunt of popular conception is not the Hunt he himself would have chosen to be. Except that he wanted to be known as a poet, his purpose was "only to teach and be taught, or if that be





too presumptuous a saying, to learn and compare notes."<sup>1</sup> Under this general statement of purpose may be included almost everything that Leigh Hunt wrote. It will exclude only the avowedly trivial and what is merely entertaining; and even that was written with an eye to one "who loved his fellow men."

In fact there is a spirit of companionableness about all that he wrote, a determination to be sympathetic with all, and thankful for even the little sweets of life. Read where we may, we shall find there all that a glowing wit, a genial humor, a playful imagination, a deep sincerity can provide for human pleasure and human betterment. This, and more, he has put into words with the magic of his personality.

If Leigh Hunt does not discover for us tongues and books and sermons and good in all the world about us; if he does not promote our happiness, minister to our appreciation of order and beauty, "open more widely the door of our library, and more often the window of the library looking out upon nature,"<sup>2</sup> then we have missed the essentially human, rich and inclusive nature of his literary mission. It is not matter that he is anxious to convey; rather it is the spirit of what he brings that is important in his estimation. And not only is the spirit of what he wrote important; the spirit in which he wrote it is even more essential for us to catch. On nearly every page of his many books we shall find evi-

- 
1. "An Attempt of the Author to Estimate his Own Character", in his "Autobiography" ed. by Ingpen. Vol. II, page 258.
  2. Thornton Hunt in the "introduction" to the "Autobiography" edited by him in 1860. Smith, Elder Co.





dences of the charming intimacy,<sup>1</sup> the tender pathos,<sup>2</sup> and the kindly humanity<sup>3</sup> that ought to arouse and stimulate to generous activity those deeplying sympathies in every heart, which too often are languid and inert in the daily intercourse with our fellows.

To be sure, Leigh Hunt was not alone in his possession of warmth and geniality. There were others besides him who looked full tenderly into the face of every man, and woman, and child; but it is only from his lips that we hear falling incontinently and sincerely the "Ah, benedicite." A few too may have had the social full-heartedness, Shelley for example; the pathetic sweetness, as witness Cowley; the love of old stories, old memories, and far hopes, as those of Lamb; but they did not have the genial personality that charms, the companionship that confides.

Do we feel, sometimes, that the gentleness and charity that thinketh no evil, so prevalent in his written utterances, is a cloaked weakness, a lack of courage, of manliness? There may be grounds for such feeling. He tells us, in fact, that he is not a courageous man. "My friends," he says, "will be surprised ... when I tell them (and I suffer inexpressible pain in the telling it) that I am not a courageous man. I feel as if the respect of one sex, and the love of the other, were forsaking me when I say so; but they ought not; and this reflection re-assures me. Yes--

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1. "A Day By the Fire." Art. XX. Reflector for 1812.

2. "Deaths of Little Children." Indicator for April 5

3. "A Visit to a Zoological Garden." in Men, Women, and Books.



circumstances, known only to myself, have shown me that the organisation I was born with has been weakened, by subsequent cares and demands upon it, into a mortifying destitution of physical courage. ... But I have great moral courage. Allow me a pale face and a little reflection; and as there is scarcely a danger in life which I have not hazarded, so there is none I could not go through with in a good cause."<sup>1</sup> Physical courage is very often moral weakness. It is easier for some to jump on pointed spikes than to face taunts of cowardice, easier to undergo physical punishment than to tell a truth. We need but measure our mistrust of Hunt's strength with our knowledge of his practiced courage, and we shall not long believe that he lacked moral fibre when moral fibre was needed to maintain his principles and his convictions in the face of opposition. He had principles and convictions, and moral courage in abundance to maintain them. In the days when liberal opinions were a dangerous possession, he held them and expressed them in no uncertain terms. He spoke straight from conviction, firmly and without fear. For his temerity he suffered with calm constancy an imprisonment of two years which by slight submission he could easily, and without any great violence to his principles, have evaded.<sup>2</sup> But we are glad he did not evade: his mission was to "teach." And unless the ideals formulated in words are worked out in deeds we may not be convicted of their verity. But so convicted we accept them as an inheritance. The worshiper of physical heroism will find

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1. Quoted by R.B. Johnson in his "Leigh Hunt," p. 139.

2. "Autobiography." Revised by Thornton Hunt. p. 208. See also "Leigh Hunt's Correspondence," vol. I. pages 69-98, for interesting side lights on his life in prison. His prison period extended from 3rd Feb., 1813 to 3rd Feb. 1815.





very little in Leigh Hunt to emulate; but if practical application of ethical principles, and moral obligations unhesitatingly and vigorously performed, have any claim on hero worshipers, then he will be of those who inspire others to take heart again.

But it is not only the spirit of Mr. Hunt's work that we notice; his wide range and catholicity of taste also attracts our attention. Charles Lamb, in a sonnet entitled "To My Friend the Indicator," hints at the compass of his reading and the universality of his taste. In an anonymous contribution to the "Indicator" (it is signed by four stars) he says:

Your easy Essays indicate a flow,  
 Dear Friend, of brain, which we may elsewhere seek;  
 And to their pages I, and hundreds, owe,  
 That Wednesday is the sweetest of the week.  
 Such observation, wit, and sense, are shewn,  
 We think the days of Bickerstaff returned;  
 And that a portion of that oil you own,  
 In his undying midnight lamp which burned.  
 I would not lightly bruise old Priscian's head,  
 Or wrong the rules of Grammar understood;  
 But, with the leave of Priscian be it said,  
 The Indicative is your Potential Mood.  
 Wit, poet, prose-man, party-man, translator--  
 H---, your best title yet is INDICATOR.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Hunt quotes this sonnet in No. LI of the Indicator for Wednesday, September 27, 1820, in an essay entitled "On Commendatory Verses." In a characteristic comment upon the sonnet, Mr. Hunt





If we accept the statement in the thirteenth line of the sonnet as literal fact, and interpret the fourteenth line liberally and sympathetically, we have a text for a dissertation on Leigh Hunt that will include nearly everything worth saying about him. To be all that is implied in the last word of Lamb's sonnet, a man must be familiar with a vast field of learning. Proof of such familiarity is evident in the pages of his "Indicator," the "London Journal," the volumes entitled "The Town," "The Old Court Suburb," "A Jar of Honey from Mount Hybla," "A Book for A Corner," "Imagination and Fancy," "Wit and Humor," "The Wishing Cap Papers," and in many more of his numerous publications. Not only is such proof to be found in his printed works; but his contemporaries, friends with whom he was in frequent converse, testify to his literary range.

Universality was his distinction. Men there were among his contemporaries keener than he, and more brilliant,—Lamb, for example, and Coleridge, and Hazlitt, and Shelley. Theirs was a rare insight, but into certain limited fields only,—an insight deeper and more see-er like than his. He did not have the pathos of Lamb, could not follow the philosophical lucubrations of Coleridge, fell short of Hazlitt's incisive criticisms, and could only worship the

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says, "Every pleasure we could experience in a friend's approbation we have felt in receiving the following verses. They are from a writer, who of all other men, knows how to extricate a common thing from what is ordinary, and to give it an underlook of pleasant consciousness and wisdom. We knew him directly, in spite of his stars. His hand as well as heart betrayed him. (Here he quotes the sonnet)

"The receipt of these verses has set us upon thinking of the good-natured countenance, which men of genius, in all ages, have for the most part shown to contemporary writers; and thence, by a natural transition, of the generous friendship they have manifested for each other. ... But generosity is natural to the humanity and the strength of genius." Were the last sentence unqualifiedly true, Leigh Hunt would be a genius.



poetic genius of Shelley. But something of each, and a little of what none of them possessed at all, was Leigh Hunt's portion. He ranged from Homer to the least and greatest of his own contemporaries, and far enough into the future to shoulder into fame men of his own period in whom he detected genius not yet apparent.

This appreciation of worth wherever lodged we see in his insistence, again and again, on the music of Spenser's verse fit to "make heaven drowsy with the harmony" <sup>1</sup> of it; on the beauty, then entirely neglected, of Chaucer's poetry, in whose hands, according to Hunt, it "burst into luxuriance ... like a sudden month of May . . . and rises in the land like a clear morning in which you see every thing with rare and crystal distinctness;" <sup>2</sup> on the supremacy of Shakespeare over the "improvements" of Dryden. Not only, however, did he understand those that had gone before; but authors of his own time, whose unrecognized genius fell under the ban of "established" criticism, were championed by him into a measure of self-confidence. This was no small thing. Many a man, less unselfish, would have climbed to his own fame on the stepping stones he laid; instead he allowed, encouraged in fact, others to mount them to their fame.. Not only were Keats, Shelley, and Wordsworth his debtors; but Tennyson could look from his laureatship and see Hunt's recommendation; and Browning could feel Hunt's touch of kinship because he, before others, had recognized promise in "Paracelsus."

Besides his wide learning, and the happy taste for extricating the uncommon from commonness, and giving it an underlook of

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1. "Imagination and Fancy." p. 64. Smith Elder. One vol.

2. "The Seer." Specimens of Chaucer, No. L.





conscious wisdom, as he says of Lamb, Mr. Hunt did much in the fields of creative and critical literature. The dividing line, however, between these two literary interests is not always clearly nor easily distinguishable. Often his creative and critical faculties, like mischievous twins, wander over the fields teasingly linked arm in arm, until we are not certain that either is not the other. But for purpose of logical treatment and clarity, we may, by allowing some overlapping, group the material we wish to examine under these two heads.

If giving us the sweets of other writers flavored with the charm of his own personality were Mr. Hunt's only contribution to literature, even then, those who have not the temerity to adventure in unknown fields of romance and poetry without a guide, may well feel that Mr. Hunt is very much worth while. But fortunately for the more adventurous, that is not the measure of his service; and neither is it the extent of his work.<sup>1</sup> In many of the essays scattered through the pages of the "Examiner," "The Indicator," and "The Companion," "The Seer," "The London Journal," "The Liberal," "The Reflector," "The Tatler," "The Chat of the Week," and "Leigh Hunt's Journal" we detect very little if any of a critical attitude. To this list of periodicals we may add such books as the "Autobiography," "The Town," and "The Old Court Suburb." And very entertaining reading matter may be found in the compilations made by him and called "One Hundred Romances of Real Life," "Readings for Railways," 1850, and "Readings for Railways," 1853.

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1. R. B. Johnson, "Leigh Hunt." pp. 116-135.



In all these writings, what an array of lively, gleesome, witty, humorous, fanciful, suggestive, serious, and pathetic essays he has produced! And in all of them he has made an effort to please the light-hearted and laughter-loving, to hearten the sick and the solitary. Pleasanter pastime of a light literary sort for the L'Allegros of life it would be hard to find; deeper sympathy for those who mourn and sit in darkness few have given us. His whole teaching of himself, as well as others, insinuates the duty of cheerfulness, not for the selfish acquisition of one's own ease, but for the sake of making a happier atmosphere for others. His writings are keyed to fine emotion and keen sensation; they are not highly ethical; rather they reflect a hearty loving nature, a sunny spirit, a happy man, a good man, a man not given to vindictiveness, and one who speaks the truth.

The veil of optimism that he drew between himself and the harsher realities of life was not for his time only. His outlook was not nineteenth century, neither was it entirely eighteenth as some of his commentators would have us believe. When Mr. Hunt concerned himself with emotion and sensation, time and place did not matter much. At such times he saw past and present alike in the alluring light of imagination and fancy.

In this respect some of his essays are not unrelated to those of Charles Lamb. Both men had the rare gift of writing about seeming trivialities in a light-hearted but subtle way, relating them often to the deepest things of life. In Mr. Hunt as in Charles Lamb, we sometimes come upon those flashes of humor which make the essays irresistable and unique. Even as Elia and Bridget in the





illusive essay on "Old China," discussing "the good old times, before we were quite so rich," make us ashamed of our uneasiness for luxuries unsatisfied, so Hunt with a delicate and fine touch pierces our selfishness, convicts us of our uncharitableness, and puts to rout our self-indulgent fallacies. Just as Mr. Lamb with his wisdom in levity makes us recognize a brotherly consideration for mistakes and circumstances; so Mr. Hunt with a jovial hilarity ban-  
 ters us out of our moroseness, and quickens in us a livelier consciousness of our blessings and everyday duties. Though Mr. Lamb's achievements may be of a higher order, Leigh Hunt's undoubtedly come nearer to human nature; if Lamb was more pithy and brilliant, Hunt possessed greater sincerity and earnestness. Much of Lamb's peculiar charm arose from a certain whimsical far-awayness and delicate romanticism that hardly touches our actual experience, while Leigh Hunt's sentiments and characters are literal transcripts, sifted and composed, but not touched up.<sup>1</sup> Neither the characters, nor the world in which they move are artificial in Hunt's writings. And it is this reality, this at-one with ourselves in our own every-day world that gives what he describes a place in our hearts.

From the creative to the critical is an easy transition, if transition it is; for the difference between the two is not always clear, nor definitely marked. Mr. Hunt, we are sure, was not born with a critical technique, and it was not in his nature to acquire one. He was born with attitudes and tendencies: attitudes to receive, tendencies to praise what he liked. Someone has kindly called him the "Ariel of criticism." And this was certainly

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1. R. B. Johnson. "Leigh Hunt." p. 119.



true in that he was not confined by the "cloven pine" of "established" criticism.

Professor Saintsbury, by no means always kindly disposed toward Hunt, says that "His criticism is very distinct in kind. It is almost purely and in the strict and proper sense aesthetic--that is to say, it does hardly anything but reproduce the sensations produced upon Hunt himself by the reading of his favorite passages."<sup>1</sup> This may not be,--certainly was not at that time, the "established" mode of criticism; but since the selections he made for the two volumes, "Imagination and Fancy," and "Wit and Humor," are the result of this kind of criticism, and since these selections reveal a sense extraordinarily keen and accurate, we may conclude that his insight was "safe" enough for the sort of criticism he attempted. In another estimate of Hunt, Mr. Saintsbury states that "He has left a very large range of critical performances, which is very rarely without taste, acuteness, and felicity of expression; and he has, as against both (Hazlitt and Lamb) the greater critics just named, the very great advantage of possessing a competent knowledge of at least one modern literature (Italian) besides his own;<sup>2</sup>... in truth, nine-tenths of his criticism is admirable, and most admirably suited to instruct and encourage the average man."<sup>3</sup> Even Lamb, in his own favorite authors and subjects misses much which Hunt unfailingly discovers. He may not always give you a valid reason for his conclusions concerning the beauties he has just pointed out, but for very many readers a true o-

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1. Saintsbury, "English Literature, 1780-1860. p. 223, 224.

2. Saintsbury, "A History of Criticism," III, 246.

3. Saintsbury, "A History of Criticism," III, 250, 251.





pinion persuasively stated is of much more consequence than the most logical justification for it; and it is this persuasiveness that makes Leigh Hunt's criticism such excellent reading.

According to Edward Dowden the "best criticism is not that which comes out of profound cogitation, but out of immense enjoyment; and the valuable critic is the critic who communicates sympathy by an exquisite record of his own delights, not the critic who attempts to communicate thought." One wonders what would become of most critics if that became a "rule-enforced." But Mr. Hunt would stand very high, would, indeed, be the best of critics; for certainly no criticism was ever the outcome of an enjoyment greater than his. Other critics, of his own circle even, undoubtedly had a firmer intellectual energy, a more vigorous close-reasoning faculty; but there is none of the race of critics who selects with such unerring and delicate tact, or recommends his finds to the enjoyment of others with such insinuating persuasiveness as Leigh Hunt. He holds open the door in the house of Literature, and with a smile that illuminates the Beauty within, invites us to feel once more the thrill of contact with that which each of us, in our heart of hearts is seeking.



## III

## HONESTY AND IDEALS

Leigh Hunt's humanity. His subjects.  
His intellectual honesty. His moral  
honesty and abidingness.

We stand in respectful awe of certain forms of literature; others we approach with condescending familiarity. To some we go for tense appeal of passion and the cry of a soul in pain; to others for the relief of laughter and smiles that break through tears. Some we admire, others we love. Of the former we have the epic, the tragic, the heroic, and of the latter the lyric, the romance, the essay.

To trace the genesis of the essay, and follow it in its historical development from its beginnings to the time of Leigh Hunt would lead us far from our present purpose.<sup>1</sup> For us it is only needful to state that the essays of Hunt have an unbroken genealogy. Sometimes it is said that Hunt was a belated eighteenth century essayist. This may be accepted with sufficient reservations. It is true only in so far as it was his purpose to foster a finer taste for literature; in this he was in harmony with them. But the

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1. Accounts of the Essay may be found in the following:

"The English Familiar Essay," edited by W.F. Bryan and R.S. Crane. Excellent historical and critical introduction and good bibliography.

"The Essay," by Orlo Williams (Art and Craft of Letters)

"The English Essay and Essayists," by Hugh Walker.

"The English Essay," in SOCIAL STUDIES by Laura J. Wylie.





best,--the Leigh Hunt element-- in his essays, was the charity that delights in the humanity of others. All his observations, whether on books, on men and women, or on nature, are the outpourings of his personality, the leanings and strength of his humanity. Very little of what his pen has portrayed is not touched with affection, with sympathy and understanding. Is it asked, "What of Lord Byron?" Even what he said of Lord Byron is not without a background of generous impulse. There is matter for a kind of impatient amusement in all that has been written concerning Hunt's criticism of Byron.<sup>1</sup> One wonders sometimes, how critics who praise Hunt for having the courage to say of Byron what he alone could say, and in the next breath blame him for saying what he said, reconcile their own attitude toward Hunt, or rather toward their own irreconcilable attitude. And this sort of straddle-aspect criticism is not infrequent among those who try to place Hunt. Pity it is, but amusing. If Hunt could only have given to his writings a chameleon quality, enabling them to reflect the color of the critics, he would not be praised for his honesty of intellectual opinion and then blamed because that honest intellectual opinion wasn't the intellectual opinion of the critic. But of Lord Byron, and Hunt's opinion of him: Hear what Mr. Hunt has to say about it himself.

"If any man, after reading the whole of my book, be capable

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1. The following sources may be consulted:

- "Morning Chronicle," January, 1828; "Examiner," 1828, p. 57.
  - "New Monthly Magazine," for 1828, p. 84.
  - "The Athenaeum," 1828. pp. 55, 70, 71.
  - "The Tatler," vol. 2., 1831, p. 441-2.
- And see also "Leigh Hunt's Relations with Byron, Shelley and Keats," by Miller, and the numerous references in the footnotes of the same vol. on pages 116, 117, 118, 119, and 120.



of thinking that I have uttered a single thing which I do ~~no~~ not believe to be true, or that in what I have uttered I was prompted by any impulse incapable of a generous construction, he is speaking out of his own instinctive meanness, and his own conscious want of veracity; and I return him any epithets he may be inclined to bestow upon me, as equally unfit for me to receive, and himself to part with. If anyone can convince me of an error, -- I am not in love with error, but with truth -- I will gladly rectify it. ... Finally, if any one asks me what it is that supports me under the trying circumstances, in which I have to work out (as becomes me) the remainder of my days, I answer, that it is my belief in the natural goodness and capability of mankind, and the testimonials borne to my endeavors in consequence by the love of those who know me most intimately, and the esteem and good will of those who publicly agree with me."<sup>1</sup> To this extract from his own defense may be added a comment by R. B. Johnson<sup>2</sup> to the effect that "Candid reviewers at once admitted that he (Hunt) had given 'a far clearer and more consistent view of the character of Lord Byron than any other writer,' but they seemed to feel that 'these revelations' would have come with better grace from any other hand. This is undeniably true, but it should be remembered, on the contrary, that had "Lord Byron and His Contemporaries" never been written we should have lost, what some of <sup>us</sup> at least would have been very unwilling to spare, a most intimate and life-like contemporary impression of the author of "Don Juan"; and a number of charges against Leigh Hunt would have remained unanswered, and, perhaps, unanswerable.

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1. Leigh Hunt, "Preface to Second Edition."

2. R. B. Johnson. "Leigh Hunt," p. 49, 50.





No one else was both able and willing to conduct his defense, and he was thus driven to act in his own counsel. ... and there is no reason to regret any part of the affair but the heated and persistent abuse with which one of the most tolerant and humane men has been loaded on account of it."

But to return to the writings of Mr. Hunt which are not only truthful, but pleasing as well. "The Animosities are mortal, but the Humanities live for ever."<sup>1</sup> And so the pathos, and humor, and wit of Leigh Hunt will live when all topics of temporary irritation have expired.

Leigh Hunt was the prince of anthology makers, not the bringer-together of "golden" treasures, nor of golden treasures such as "Hail, to thee blithe spirit," "Had we never loved sae blindly," "The world is too much with us," "Sunset and evening star," or "Helen, thy beauty is to me"; this too he could certainly do, and did do; but more truly, he was the gleaner of the unforgettable treasures in existence itself. As we read through his pages much we find that is common, but all taken together there seem to have been comparatively few pages in his book of life whereon he has not left print or record of the life he lived, the beauty he saw, the joy he felt, the hope, the regret, the love he sheltered or confessed. Most fittingly, most entertainingly, most unguardedly he has told us how the faint winds of thought and fancy have blown over his experiences until they yielded him Aeolian music.

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1. Christopher North, in a full and complete apology to Hunt in "Blackwood's" for August, 1834, p. 273, for that magazine's slanderous articles against Hunt and the friends of Hunt.



Leigh Hunt did not wander far for his subjects. The "ghoul-haunted woodland of weir" was not for him; neither did he lose himself in "faerie lands forlorn." The realms he wandered in were close at hand, the observations he made were about familiar things: he wrote of home and fireside, of town and country, of weather and the seasons, of theaters and clubs, of dumb animals and flowers, of dress and social amenities, of books and writers of books, of characters and kings, of tales in fiction and romances, of real life. But whatever subject he touched, whatever phase of it he chose to look upon, was treated with intellectual honesty. Whatever he wrote had upon it the characteristic stamp of his own personality, the ear-mark of his own intellectual reaction. He passed nothing off as his own that was not of his coinage. Mr. Hunt must have been a veritable encyclopedia of information, and with it all a tireless investigator; for much of what he wrote was matter that required immense labor and painstaking care to present properly and honestly. We are told that Mr. Hunt was not a rapid writer; yet we know that he verified all his statements of fact.<sup>1</sup> Says Thornton Hunt: "His constant industry has been mentioned: he could work from early morning till late into midnight, every day, for months together. ... For the greater part even his recreation was auxiliary to work. He had ... heaps of information at his finger's ends; yet he habitually verified even what he knew already, though it should be only for some parenthetical use."<sup>2</sup>

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1. One wonders how he ever got the facts for such books, for example, as "The Town," and "The Old Court Suburb." To the present day there is nothing better nor more readable on Old London than "The Town."

2. Thornton Hunt in the "Introduction" to the "Autobiography." One of the finest tributes by a son to a father yet in print.





Another characteristic that stands clearly back of all that Mr. Hunt wrote is his moral honesty. With him this was akin to religion. In his writings we find perfect truthfulness, alike of heart and intellect. -- an integrity which led him to sacrifice much, to invite misunderstanding, criticism and abuse. Moral honesty was so much a part of Leigh Hunt, that any account of his writings which omits it is incomplete. Perhaps the "Religion of the Heart" represents more fully than any other single volume the religious side of an essentially pious nature. It is a manual of aspiration, faith, and duty conceived in the spirit of natural piety. "And if anybody ask," he says in the Preface, "whether in other respects I practise what I preach, I answer, that I profess but to be a disciple in my own school; that some of its injunctions are harder to me than they will be to many; and that I pray daily for strength not to disgrace them."<sup>1</sup> Kindly emotions and a pure morality, a true sense of the beneficence of God and of the beauty of creation, a heightening sensibility that shuns all contact with theology, and shrinks only with too much dread from the hard dogmas of the pulpit, make up the substance of the book, of which the style throughout is exquisitely gentle and refined. We quote to illustrate at once Hunt's firmest conviction, and the very spring of his literary method:

"As a family bound together in love and duty, even such are we incited to hope, that all mankind may become.... In this hope let us live, and let us rejoice, interchanging our comforts, dividing our burdens, and in every way striving to show ourselves

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1. How do the critics justify their criticisms of Hunt in the face of such self-criticism? There is much of this in his works.



worthy of the heaven to which we look!<sup>1</sup> ... We must earn our pleasures as much as possible through the medium of others, sharing with them our enjoyments ...<sup>2</sup>

Leigh Hunt insisted that it is man's duty to exercise all the faculties, with which he has been gifted, in a sane healthy way. This he believed was the main earthly object of all social endeavor.<sup>3</sup> This purpose of making men happy, and advocating that they make themselves happy, is at the root of Mr. Hunt's writings. Everywhere he presses beauty into the service of man. For him it has a place in the universe only because it contributes to man's happiness. And men and women in a world replete with beauty, should be good men and good women. That was the business of beauty: to make man happy, to give him pleasure.

Leigh Hunt leads us into Edens of literature; he takes us to orchards of unplucked fruit; he tempts us with apples of knowledge, and with a deftness all his own keeps from us the forbidden fruit. His choicest essays give us a sense of golden summer afternoons, beauties on the borderland of dreams, romance in Gothic archways and old tottering houses with coats of arms upon them. And over them all is the spirit of his sensuous nature, his tropical temperament, his Italianized imagination, a sweet, clean, pure sense of the abidingness of "deeds of daring rectitude," of the moral duty to "urge man's search to vaster issues." Let Hunt himself bring the chapter to a close with part of a sentence from his Preface to

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1. "Religion of the Heart." p. 21.

2. "Religion of the Heart." p. 31.

3. "Religion of the Heart." p. 18.





"Men, Women and Books": ... "if there is anything which consoles him for those short-comings either in life or writings, which most men of any decent powers of reflection are bound to discover in themselves as they grow old, and of which he has acquired an abundant perception, it is the consciousness, not merely of having been consistent in opinion (which might have been bigotry), or of having lived to see his political opinions triumph (which was good luck), or even of having outlived misconstruction and enmity (tho the good will of generous enemies is inexpressibly dear to him), but of having done his best to recommend that belief in good, that cheerfulness in endeavor, that discernment of universal beauty, that brotherly consideration for mistake and circumstance, and that repose on the happy destiny of the whole human race, which appear to him not only the healthiest and most animating principles of action, but the only true religious homage to Him that made us all."



## IV

## HOME AND FIRESIDE

Cold mornings. Days by the fire. The Realities of the unreal. Little children. "Oh, wilderness were paradise e-now." "Easer of all woes."

The essays that might be grouped under "Home and Fireside," are of a kind about which little can be said critically. The temptation is to quote them entire: their quality is like the charm of upland pastures, nestling valleys, streams in flowered woods, odors on April and October days, music on Mad-day festivals, motly memories of years that are gone. Brief, most of them; musings worked out in words. Behind them there is no urgent interpretation of life beyond the admonition to love<sup>1</sup> and be kind.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Hunt broods over a dainty bit of fancy or feeling till he overflows with affection for it. He dandles a pleasing image on his knee as though it were a child, pats it lovingly on the back, and addresses it in all manner of dainty phrases. Read, for example, his chatty gossip in the essay entitled "Getting up on Cold Mornings."<sup>3</sup> Delightful, all of it, in spite of the shiver we involuntarily experience as we read. How very easy it is for Mr. Hunt to excuse himself, and thereby also the reader, for lying in bed of a cold

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1. "The Eleven Commandments." in A Jar of Honey, p. 22.

2. "Cruelty to Children." in "The Companion," May 7, 1828.

3. "Indicator," January 19, 1820.





morning when he allows (invites) himself to indulge the fancy that Adam was not under the necessity of shaving, and that Eve did not have to walk out of her delicious bower upon three inches of ice. Quite wittily he puts before the reader the luxuries imagined, and the sophistries indulged by an ingenious liar in bed.

The wise ones, who counsel that getting up of a cold morning is merely a matter of will, do not stand high in Mr. Hunt's regard. Those who say that a person, who has been warm all night, and finds his system in a state of perfect harmony with the temperature of his bed, need only take a resolution to rise, and the thing is done, are simply mistaken. When Mr. Hunt, lying in bed, is suddenly made conscious of the weather by touching stone-cold sheets, by seeing his breath roll forth like smoke out of a lone cottage chimney, by noticing the frozen windows, and to cap it all, by hearing the servant announce as he comes in, "It is very cold this morning, is it not?" he is deaf to all resolutions to rise, and to all little philosophers busy with the affairs of other people. How very exactly he pictures for us the humorous situation of the liar in bed asking questions of his servant concerning the temperature of the atmosphere outside the inside of the bed. With what wit he makes the servant contrive his questions so that his answers must fall in with the wishes of the liar in bed. One excuse for not rising after another is hunted up and indulged. But finally comes the conviction that he must rise. Water for shaving is called for. Another respite while the servant is gone for the hot water, during which time it is, of course, "no use" to get up. One or two more interruptions, and delicious



five minutes almost spoiled by thinking upon the "villainous" custom of shaving. "No wonder," he thinks, "that the Queen of France took part with the rebels against that degenerate King, her husband, who first affronted her smooth visage with a face like her own. And thereupon we are asked to review a whole army of bewiskered faces; Emperors, cardinals, artists, authors, poets, kings, philosophers, Persian gentlemen and Turks, all are brought in to prove that shaving is a modern invention of the devil's recruiting officer. "The mechanical man shall get up without any ado at all; and so shall the barometer."<sup>1</sup>

How very different the mood in "A Day by the Fire."<sup>2</sup> Light-hearted still, but therewith an underlying tone of seriousness, he talks quietly of indoor enjoyments. As the hours of the day slip from sunrise to darkness, bringing with them the changing cares, so the tone of the essay changes, from light-hearted comment to reflection, as becomes the "Reflector." This day by the fire must begin early: "The morning is clear and cold; time is half past seven; scene is a breakfast room." There must be, in addition to this, if it so please the reader, a little hoar frost on the window, a bird or two coming after the crumbs, and the light smoke from the early chimneys. There must be a fire in the breakfast room to which he can apply the poker--"whether needed or not; and when the hundred little sparkles fly from the coal dust that falls within the bars of the grate, and the flames themselves mount aloft with a deep and fitful sound as of a shaken carpet;"

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1. One must read the entire essay to get its flavor. "Indicator" for January 19, 1820. pp. 117-20.

2. "The Reflector." Vol. II, Art. XX. pp. 400-419.





Here epithets fail him so he has recourse to poetry:

Then shine the bars, the cakes in smoke aspire,

A sudden glory bursts from all the fire.

The conscious wight, rejoicing in the heat,

Rubs the blithe knees, and toasts th' alternate feet.\*

Evidently, Mr. Hunt has not yet become serious. The cares of the worry-infested day have not found lodgement in the ~~the~~ mind that can imagine the humor of the sitter before the fire, toasting one foot, then the other foot, then both at once, then neither while he is trying to shield his face from the heat, and wondering how a back can be so cold, and a front can be so warm, when both front and back, and feet and face, belong to the same toaster. If the picture here presented gives us pleasure, we suppose it is in despite of the poetry. Mr. Hunt will not allow us to forget that he has just been apprised of the fact that life is a matter of contrasts, and that sometime he may want to be a phlogistic advocate of a ller in bed of a cold morning. So cold plays its part in the scene before us. How tantalizingly, and with what infinite and exact details, he describes the breakfast and the morning fire! Here is a bit of it in his own words:

..."if you eat plain bread and butter with your tea, it is fit that your moderation should be rewarded with a good blaze; and if you indulge in hot rolls or toast, you will hardly keep them to their warmth without it, particularly

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\*In a footnote Mr. Hunt says that the lines are a "Parody upon a part of the well-known description of night, with which Mr. Pope has swelled out the passage in Homer, and the faults of which are known and have long been appreciated by general readers." Query: Is he satirizing Pope?



if you read; and then, --if you take in a newspaper,-- what a delightful change from the wet, raw, dabbling fold of paper, when you first touch it, to the dry, crackling, crisp superficies, which, with a skilful spat of the finger nails at its upper end, stands at once in your hand, and looks as if it had said, "Come on and read me." Nor is it the look of the newspaper only which the fire must render complete:--it is the interest of the ladies who may happen to form part of your family, -- of your wife in particular, if you have one, to avoid the niggling and pinching aspect of cold; it takes away the harmony of her features and the graces of her behaviour; while on the other hand there is scarcely a more interesting sight in the world than that of a neat, delicate, goodhumored female, presiding at your breakfast table, with hands tapering out of her long sleeves, eyes with a touch of Sir Peter Lely in them, and a face set in a little oval frame of muslin tied under the chin, and retaining a certain tinge of the pillow without its cloudiness."

A very comfortable place to remain, this place at the breakfast table; but Mr. Hunt must give us a bit of the dinner time. And that the joy of the breakfast may not be without its "fly in the ointment" he humorizes about the three evils of a fire at dinner. Persons who must sit with their backs to the fire are "liable to be scorched, while at the same time they render the persons opposite them liable to be frozen, so that the fire becomes uncomfortable to the former, and tantalizing to the latter." For all this he has a remedy. It is so obvious a remedy too,





that one wonders why it had not been put to universal use. Why not, he thinks, use semi-circular dining tables, with the base unoccupied toward the fire-place. Then everybody could face the fire. Screens could be placed to keep the fire where it was wanted. How very fine all this would be. Entertaining enough, all this chatter, and entertaining was what Mr. Hunt wanted it to be; but we like him better in his twilight mood. And if we have a feeling that he too liked himself best in it, we will not be far wrong. He seems quite at home in it, perfectly at ease.

How easily he takes us with him in his fancies. We watch the glowing coals exhibit the shifting "form of hills, and valleys, and gulfs, of fiery Alps, whose heat is uninhabitable even by spirits; or of black precipices, from which sweet fairies seem about to spring away on sable wings." Here we may plan our Utopian schemes and dream of happy certainties which we cannot, nor care to prove. Here we may become poet, and on golden wings explore a thousand systems and stop not until we have found a perfect Paradise, whose fields are young roses and whose air is music. Here may be ours the charm that stillness has for a world-fretted ear, broken only by the far whispers of a thousand tiny hushings, like fairies in alarm. But this is all Utopian, so let us out of this wonderland and bring us to "tea and coffee," and to the hours between that and bedtime. Mr. Hunt, we think, must have been a genuine firesider, one who when company was near would not let the fire die down, nor the snuffs of his candle run to seed. But how teasingly he pictures the possibilities of such action on the part of an unkind host.



Those who are familiar with the tenderness of Lamb in "Old China," with the charm of Smith in "Dream Thorpe," with the fireside and home dreamings of Irving in the "Sketch Book," or with the sentiment that borders on sentimentality of Mitchell, in "Dream Life", must feel that the definition-defying humorous-pathetic, romantic nature of Hunt's writing is at one with what they found in life worth expressing. As in theirs, so in ~~Mr.~~ Hunt's essays we recall by imagination, not through superstition, stories of the secret world situate neither in time nor place; in them fairies dance and play their midnight pranks; idle fancies, old memories, far hopes of little lulled abodes come and are gone; in them we live again on Christmas Eves, and hold high festival with the Unrealized, ere life's beckoning Future became the backward gazing Past. Idle fancies, these, all of them; incomprehensible to minds clogged with every-day earthliness, but to the souls ranging in search of their destinies not altogether useless. Hunt's philosophy may not be of the profoundest; his grasp may not include the destiny of worlds; the deepest, darkest problems of existence may not be sounded by his plummet; but we feel that he speaks with the earnestness, and the understanding of one who has learned that "tears have their delight, as well as laughter."<sup>1</sup> We quote part of a paragraph to illustrate:

... "Fancies ... will occupy us too, and steal us away from ourselves, when other recollections fail us or grow painful,--when friends are found selfish, or better friends can but commiserate; or when the world has nothing in it

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1. "A Jar of Honey from Mount Hybla." p. 33.





to compare with what we have missed out of it. They may even lead us to higher and more solemn meditation, till we work our way beyond the clinging atmosphere, heavy from this earthly sojourn, and look abroad upon the light that knows neither blemish nor bound, while our ears are greeted at that egress by the harmony of the skies, and our eyes behold the lost and congenial spirits that we have loved, hastening to welcome us with their sparkling eyes and their curls that are ripe with sunshine."<sup>1</sup>

It has been said that in reading ~~Mr.~~ Hunt we feel as if he thought "to bask in the sunshine were his only duty," and ours. True enough. So should it be, -- some of the time. To all of us comes a day when the one thing to do is to bask in the sunshine. That is precisely as ~~Mr.~~ Hunt would have it; it exactly fits in with his purpose. Listen while he states it: "Pleasure is the business of this Journal: we own it: we love to begin it with the word: it is like commencing the day (as we are now commencing it) with sunshine in the room. Pleasure for all who can receive pleasure; consolation and encouragement for the rest."<sup>2</sup> His purpose was always to make adversity hopeful, prosperity sympathetic; to make every body kinder, happier, richer in the pleasures that lie about our feet. The belief in the good and beautiful never forsook Hunt: it was medicine to him in sickness, riches in poverty, and the best part that delighted him in health and success. As we read him we find that he is very

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1. "Reflector," II, 418, 419.

2. "Further Remarks on the Design of the Journal," Preface to "Leigh Hunt's London Journal." Reprinted in "The Seer," I, 9.



gay, very vivacious, very jaunty, and sometimes, more than a little flippant and coxcombical; but he is never a "frothy frivolist" as critics less kind and wise, and far more flippant than Hunt, have mischaracterized him. If it were possible to qualify him by a single phrase (but it is not), that phrase might be, we think, "Earnestness at ease." In proof of this, and also as an example of "earnestness at ease", hear him at the age of fifty, in the "Address" of the first number of "Leigh Hunt's London Journal."<sup>1</sup>

..."We have been at this work now, off and on, man and boy (for we began essay writing while in our teens) for upwards of thirty years; and excepting that we would fain have done far more, and that experience and suffering have long ago restored to us the natural kindliness of boyhood, and put an end to a belief in the right or utility of severer ways and views of any thing or person, we feel the same as we have done throughout; and we have the same hope, the same love, the same faith in the beauty and goodness of nature and all her prospects, in space and in time; we could almost add, if a sprinkle of white hairs in our black would allow us, the same youth; for whatever may be thought of a consciousness to that effect, the feeling is so real, and trouble of no ordinary kind has so remarkably spared the elasticity of our spirits, that we <sup>are</sup> often startled to think how old we have become,

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1. Reprinted in the Seer, vol. I, p. 9. The same "Address" is also reprinted in R. B. Johnson's "The Poems of Leigh Hunt," pages 210-219.





compared with the little of age that is in our disposition; and we mention this to bespeak the reader's faith in what we shall write hereafter, if he is not acquainted with us already. If he is, he will no more doubt us than the children do at the fireside. We have had so much sorrow, and yet are capable of so much joy, and receive pleasure from so many familiar objects, that we sometimes think we should have had an unfair portion of happiness, if our life had not been one of more than ordinary trial."

From gay to grave, from grave to exuberant fancy is not difficult of accomplishment for Leigh Hunt. We are constantly reminded of this as we turn the pages of the "Indicator."<sup>1</sup> In the ability to invest with poetry the most trivial commonplaces; in the delicate sensibility with which he feels, and teaches his readers also to understand the inner spirit and beauty of every object of his contemplation, he was neither equaled nor even approached by his predecessors or contemporaries. If indeed the "mission" of the poet be to feel and express the beauty of the universe, many of the essays now before us are poems in every sense of the word which does not involve the idea of metrical rhythm.

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1. Hunt has a characteristically humorous article on the "Difficulty of Finding a Name for A Work of this Kind" in the first number of the "Indicator," dated Wednesday, Oct. 13, 1819.

Mary Cowden Clarke, in a letter to Robert Balmanno, under date of August 3, 1852, says that her mother (Mrs. Vincent Novello), named the journal. "By the by," she writes, "did you know that my mother was the godmother of the "Indicator"? She suggested the name, and Leigh Hunt adopted it, and the passage as a motto which she had pointed out as affording ground for a good



Just now we happen upon the essay entitled "Realities of the Imagination."<sup>1</sup> In it he describes how the faculty that solaced so much that was troubled in his own daily life, enriches its happy possessor in the most literal sense, and creates for him images and shapes of beauty. "There is nothing imaginary," he says, "in the common acceptation of the word." The logic of Moses in the "Vicar of Wakefield," seems good logic for Mr. Hunt. "Whatever is, is," says that worthy. And so Hunt. He insists that we can judge of things only by their effect. Imagination, Mr. Hunt thinks, "adds a precious seeing to the eye;" and if we read his essays with imagination they will add a precious understanding to the heart. In many of his essays we get a sense of the reality that dwells in things of the spirit. We are rescued from the babble of common cares and enabled to hear all the affectionate voices of earth and heaven. We hear the brooks in the solitudes where they flow; and

... "Gentle gales,  
Fanning their oderiferous wings, dispense  
Native perfumes; and whisper whence they stole  
those balmy spoiles."<sup>2</sup>

Are these ministrations of nature only imaginary, and therefore non-existent, because, forsooth, we experience them only while we read? Mr. Hunt would say, "They are very real, more real than any material thing, because a material thing can be taken from you; but the possessions of the imagination are yours, and not

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title. (The motto referred to is: "A dram of sweet is worth a pound of sour." Spenser).

1. "Indicator." March 22, 1820.

2. Milton, "Paradise Lost," Book IV.





transferable." Let him speak for his faith,

"The poets are called creators, because their magical words bring forth to our eyes the abundant images and beauties of creation. They put them there, if the reader pleases; and so are literally creators. but whether put there or discovered, whether created or invented (for invention means nothing but finding out), there they are. If they touch us, they exist as much as anything that touches us. If a passage in King Lear brings a tear to our eyes, it is as real as the touch of a sorrowful hand. If the flow of a song of Anacreon's intoxicates us, it is as true to a pulse within us as the wine he drank. We hear not their sounds with ears, nor see their sight with eyes; but we hear and see both so truly, that we are moved with pleasure; and the advantage, nay, even the test of hearing, and seeing at any time, is not in the hearing and seeing, but in the ideas we realize, and the pleasures we derive. Intellectual objects, therefore, in as much as they come home to us, are as true a part of the population of nature, as visible ones; and they are infinitely more abundant. Between the tree of a country clown, and the tree of a Milton or a Spenser, what a difference in point of productiveness! Between the plodding of a sexton through a church yard, and the walk of a Gray, what a difference! What a difference between the Bermudas of a ship-builder, and the Bermoothes of Shakespeare: the isle

... Full of noises

Sounds, and sweet airs that give delight, and hurt not;  
the isle of elves and fairies, that chased the tides to and



fro on the sea shore; ... Such are the discoveries which the poets make for us; --worlds, to which that of Columbus was but a handful of brute matter."

We have quoted thus at length, because one great injustice, among many others we do to Mr. Hunt's essays by merely describing them, arises from the hopelessness of conveying in the least degree any idea of the earnestness, the ease, the graces of style and manner, the natural, spontaneous impulse with which every idea is touched. We could as easily describe Jenny Lind's singing by saying that she sang "Annie Laurie." In this, as in so many of his essays, we have the outpourings of a heart beating in sympathy with all suffering, all joy, all aspirations, -- the spontaneous reflections of a mind rich in literary knowledge, overflowing with fancy. But nothing short of actual perusal can give an adequate idea of the style and manner of the essay.

We should like to quote entire the next little essay<sup>1</sup> that falls under our notice. It is just such delicate wisdom as this essay holds that chastens the joys and sorrows with a touch of quiet, unpretending pathos. It is not at all surprising that this grave and tender essay was the favorite of Charles Lamb. We feel a little disposed to ponder and fabricate what ~~Mr.~~ Lamb, whose sorrow was like no other sorrow in the annals of literature, may have thought upon reading the statement in this essay that "the true way is, to let them grapple with the unavoidable sorrow, and try to win it into gentleness by a reasonable yielding." We would not

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1. "Deaths of Little Children." The Indicator, April 5, 1820.





have it understood that the sentence just<sup>quoted</sup> from the essay was dear to Mr. Lamb because it gave him a new philosophy; it was dear to him because it strengthened and corroborated the resolution he had made more than twenty years before to "grapple with unavoidable sorrow." Also it must have appealed to Lamb because it expresses sensitively the deep and abiding love he had for children, --real children, and "dream children." May we not quote a part of a paragraph for the sake of its heartfelt gravity.

"We do not mean that everybody must lose one of his children, in order to enjoy the rest; or that every individual loss afflicts us in the same proportion. We allude to the deaths of infants in general. These might be as few as we could render them. But if none at all ever took place, we should regard every little child as a man or woman secured; and it will easily be conceived what a world of endearing cares and hopes this security would endanger. The very idea of infancy would lose its continuity with us. Girls and boys would be future men and women, not present children. They would have attained their full growth in our imaginations, and might as well have been men and women at once. On the other hand, those who have lost an infant are never, as it were, without an infant child. They are the only persons who, in one sense, retain it always; and they furnish their neighbors with the same idea. The other children grow up to manhood and womanhood, and suffer all the changes of mortality. This one alone is rendered an immortal child. Death has arrested it with its kindly harshness, and blessed it into an eternal image of youth and innocence."



In a manner equally informal, and quite as serious, in spite of surface playfulness, he speculates in a kind of first draft upon his view of a future state. He suggests his attitude in the title.<sup>1</sup> For him heaven is not heaven, unless its Elysian fields duplicate, at least remind him of England's green lanes, brown dells, breezy skies, and Hampstead's

... woods that let mansions through,

And cottaged vales with pillowy fields beyond,

And clump of darkening pines, and prospects blue,

And that clear path through all, where daily meet

Cool cheeks, and brilliant eyes, and morn-elastic feet.<sup>2</sup>

Familiar as all strange things must have been to one of his imaginative insight, "poetry and calamity, surprise and strange sights of the imagination," yet he could not reconcile himself to a belief in, nor adjust his habits of life to, a future "Paradise Mount" that did not in most ways correspond to actual paradise mounts in any pretty village in England. He pleads for "some snug interlunar spot" where, three hundred years hence, he may be dining, and drinking tea with Shakespeare, and Spenser, and Boccaccio, and Sir Walter Scott; and "the Arabian Nights must bear us company." Yet even this stopping off place to a higher heaven must be progressive. "We cannot," he says, "well fancy a celestial ancient Briton delighting himself with painting his skin, or a Chinese angel hobbling a mile up the Milky Way in order to show herself to advantage."

Though he does not say so, yet we fancy him, when tired of

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1. "An Earth Upon Heaven." in *The Companion* for April 2, 1828.

2. "To Hampstead." in *Examiner*, Nov. 12, 1815.





writing poetry, tired of being light-hearted in company, tired of conversing with divine friends, we fancy him roaming in Elysian fields with Her ("true; oh, so true, that you take her word as you would a diamond"); or when tired of roaming, imagine him in some Earth-Elysian wilderness confiding to Her that

"A book of verses underneath a bough  
A jug of wine, a loaf of bread -- and thou  
Beside me singing in the wilderness.  
Oh, wilderness were paradise enow."

Only that "wine" in Hunt's case would undoubtedly be tea. Flip-pant and light-hearted, his attitude toward the Great Adventure may seem. And it was a seeming; no more. For life, fundamentally, was very serious to him, and Death and the future no less so. He was afraid of neither, cried Hail and Farewell with a smile. He wanted to let go of life gently, and by degrees; he wanted not to be loosed entirely from the earth, not at once. Earth and its capabilities, its little accomplishments and its great and unfulfilled aspirations must surely, somewhere closely linked with the place of beginnings, come to a more perfect fruition. So Hunt believed. "Is there no beautiful realization of the fleeting type that is shown us? No body to this shadow? No quenching to this taugth and continued thirst? No arrival at these natural homes and resting-places, which are so heavenly to our imaginations, even though they be built of clay, and are situate in the fields of our infancy? We are becoming graver than we intended; but to return to our proper style."

We began this chapter with comments on "Getting up on Cold Mornings," and we think it not amiss to end it with what we may



find worth saying about the essay on "Sleep."<sup>1</sup> This, Mr. Hunt tells us<sup>2</sup>, was Hazlitt's favorite of the "Indicator" essays, "perhaps because there is a picture in it of a sleeping despot," adds Mr. Hunt. But Hazlitt insisted "with more enthusiasm than he was accustomed to do," that it was the conclusion about the parent and the bride that appealed most to him. May either be the reason, or neither. We are not concerned in the right answer, nor the wrong. For us the essay has the charm of mingled humor and poetic musings. Our laugh is neither loud nor long over Mr. Hunt's description of the inopportuneness of uninvited sleep; it is probably nothing more than a disturbance of the muscles that communicate amusement; but we do feel an inward chuckle, or groan, depending on whether we recall ourselves as being the observer or the observed. disturbing our composure as we read of the discomfiture annoying the complacency of those who exercise the misunderstood privileges of sleep in company. It is not precisely the proper thing, he says, "to escape into slumber from an argument; or to take it as an affair of course, only between you and your biliary duct; or to assent with involuntary nods to all that you have just been disputing; much less is it well to sit nodding and tottering beside a lady; or to be in danger of dropping your head into the fruit plate or your host's face; or of waking up and saying 'Just so' to the bark of a dog, or 'Yes, madam,' to the black at your elbow."

Perhaps the laugh we indulge in over this and over what he says about clowns and sleeping despots, is not altogether hearty,

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1. "Indicator" for January 12, 1820.

2. "Autobiography," edited by Ingpen, II, 50.





not quite objective; perhaps it has a painful personal note in it, an element of uncomfortable memories, and comes with a blush, and a bit shamefaced; for we may realize, to our secret selves, that others besides clowns and despots may be unlovely in sleep. The knitter up of raveled care may be beautiful in figures of speech, but in figures of flesh and blood not precisely enchanting. In our waking moments we may be good to look upon. We may be proud in our walk, dainty in the way we eat; we may wear our evening attire with the air of infinite superiority; in a word, we may show ourselves grand even in trifling things. But asleep, we are the manikins of a petrifying tyrant. Sleep is no respecter of persons. He arrests us in the most ridiculous postures; no limb-twisting Charlie Chaplin could rival them. "Imagine a despot lifted up to the gaze of his valets, with his eyes shut, his mouth open, his left hand under his right ear, his other twisted and hanging helplessly before him like an idiot's, one knee lifted up, and the other leg stretched out, or both knees huddled up together; what a scarecrow to lodge majestic power in!"

But if Sleep is unkind, so is he kindly too. And it is as kindly that the poets have most frequently treated him. The authors to whom Mr. Hunt refers us are many, and of the best. Ovid, Spenser, Chaucer, Sophocles, and Beaumont and Fletcher are called upon in praise of sleep. As one of his favorite passages on sleep he quotes from Beaumont and Fletcher's "Valentinian,"

"Care-charming Sleep, thou easer of all woes,  
 Brother to Death, sweetly thyself dispose  
 On this afflicted prince. Fall like a cloud



In gentle showers; give nothing that is loud  
Or painful to his slumbers: easy, light,  
And as a purling stream, though son of Night,  
Pass by his troubled senses: sing his pain  
Light hollow murmuring wind, or silver rain  
Into this prince, gently, oh gently slide;  
And kiss him into slumbers, like a bride."

"Sleep," he concludes, "is most graceful in an infant; soundest, in one who has been tired in the open air; completest, to the seaman after a hard voyage; most welcome, to the mind haunted with one idea; most touching to look at, in the parent that has wept; lightest, in the playful child; proudest, in the bride adored."





## V

## CRITIC AND CENSOR-GENERAL

Ostentatious impartiality. "Puffing and punning." A moral Quixote. Rules to violate. Praise to the praiseworthy. Self-appraisal.

Leigh Hunt's earliest critical writings on matters theatrical were articles contributed to a little paper called the "News," set up in 1805 by his brother John.<sup>1</sup> Extracts from these contributions subsequently formed a fifty-eight page appendix to an original volume on the same subject, entitled, "Critical Essays on the Performers of the London Theatres." These considerations of the actor's art constituted an innovation in dramatic criticism and created a new field for the familiar essay. They brought Leigh Hunt into the public eye by their unprecedented independence of opinion and impartiality. Evidently he was resolved to pull the stage out of the vitiated state into which it had gone, for he tells us that "he is resolved, that if the somniferous dramatists will suffer him to keep his eyes open and hold his pen, and while he is honored with the public attention,

. . . . .no dull dramatic knave

Shall walk the stage in quiet to his grave.

But this only if there is nothing to praise.

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1. That is, John printed and apparently edited it for the proprietors. In the "Autobiography" Leigh states that he knew so little of the proprietors that he could not with certainty recollect any one of them.



It must not be supposed that there were no "professional" critics when Leigh Hunt was tickling the public by pinching the players. Then as now, there were "gentlemen" who did the theatres and gave what the public took for criticism, but which was in reality "a draft upon the box office, or a reminiscence of last Thursday's salmon and lobster sauce."<sup>1</sup> Not only that, but it was customary for editors, who were also the proprietors of papers, to be intimate with actors and dramatists; and under such circumstances it was inevitable that critics, actors, and play<sup>w</sup>-rights should tickle one another with the feathers they stuck in one another's hats. Puffing and giving of tickets, interchange of amenities, and flattery of power on one side and puns on the other, were the order of the day.

Into this well-oiled critical machinery that produced, for the price of a ticket or a lobster supper, an "excellent" Mr. Bannister, a "Charming" Mrs. Jordan, a "crowded house," and a stage upon which "the whole went off with *éclat*," Mr. Hunt came with the twenty-three year old zeal of a Sir Galahad, ready to carve the masks of men, "guided by nothing but a regard for truth, for the real pleasure of the town, and for the literary reputation of Englishmen."<sup>2</sup> His comments were undoubtedly juvenile, ("Good God! to think of the grand opinion I had of myself in those days.")<sup>3</sup> and a little conceited; but they were entirely honest, and sincere, and in most cases just, for which reasons they had a wholesome ef-

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1. "Autobiography", edited by his son, 1860, p. 138.

2. "Critical Essays of the Performers of the London Theatres," in the Appendix, page 16.

3. "Autobiography," ed. by his son, 1860, p. 139.





fect upon contemporary periodical dramatic criticism. Mr. William Archer believes that Leigh Hunt may "be reckoned the first English dramatic critic... He was actually the first critical journalist who succeeded in emerging from the mists of anonymity. Probably he was the first who deserved to emerge."

In his dramatic criticisms, as in all his other writings, he was a kind of moral Quixote. He may, at times, have been too much of a "grail" hunter, but in all his hunting he was characteristically sincere, independent, and vivacious. We see his sincerity and independence in his resolution to be entirely free from obligations of whatever kind. He kept himself rigidly aloof from everything with which censorship was likely to be corrupted. "To know an actor personally," he says, "appeared to me a vice not to be thought of, and I would as lief have taken poison as accepted a ticket from the theatres." The vivacity of his criticism may be illustrated by the following set of satiric rules he drew up for the critics of the day; the theatrical critic of a newspaper is admonished by "you will of course make use of the first column:"

"A crowded house-----a theatre on the night of a performance,  
when all the back seats and upper boxes are  
empty.

"An amusing author----an author whose very seriousness makes us  
laugh in spite of himself.

"A successful author--an author who has been damned only four times  
out of five.

"A good author-----the general term for an author who gives  
good dinners.



"A respectable actor--an insipid actor; one who in general is  
neither hissed nor applauded.

"A fine actor-----one who makes a great noise; a tatterdema-  
lion of passions; a clap-trapper: one intend-  
ed by nature for a town-crier. This appella-  
tion may at all times be given to Mr. Pope,  
who has the finest lungs of any man on the  
stage.

"A good actor-----the general term for an actor who gives good  
dinner.

"A charming play-----a play full of dancing, music, and scenery;  
a play in which the less the author has to  
do, the better.

"Great applause-----applause mixed with the hisses of the gallery  
and pit.

"Unbounded and universal applause--applause mixed with the hisses  
of the pit only. This phrase is frequently  
to be found at the bottom of the play-house  
bills in declaring the reception a new piece  
has met with. The play as announced in these  
bills is generally printed in red-ink, an  
emblem, no doubt, of the modesty with which  
they speak of themselves."<sup>1</sup>

This and other strictures of a like nature undoubtedly give evidence  
of over self-confidence, but they also give evidence of unselfish  
honesty and sincerity, courageous enough to attack popular play-

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1. "Critical Essays, etc." Appendix, page 19.





writers of the day for their "miserable" productions; the managers were scored for their want of taste, the critics for their corruption, and the actors for their supercilious satisfaction with their own personal perfection. ("There's a lady in the stage-box contemplating my shape! The critics in the pit are astonished at my ease! My character sits well on me, and so do my small-clothes.") He classifies the principal local improprieties of the actors as

"Gazing at the boxes,  
Adjusting the dress,  
Telling the audience their soliloquies,  
Wearing their hats in rooms, and  
Not wearing them in the open air."<sup>1</sup>

"A few words from the critical benches, or a shout of 'Put on your hat!' from the galleries, might end them at once." He admits that this criticism from the galleries might be unpleasant for the actor, but the actor should take care not to deserve it. He harped a good deal on Mr. Kemble's "vicious" pronunciation<sup>2</sup>, women's male attire<sup>3</sup>, and the need for modesty."<sup>4</sup> Of all his criticisms, Pope as a tragic actor came in for the severest:

"... When Shakespeare wrote his description of "a robustious fellow, who tears a passion to tatters," one would suppose that he had been shewn by some supernatural means the future race of actors, as Macbeth had a prophetic view of Banquo's race, and that the robustious phantom was Mr. Pope. Here is an actor then without face, expression, or delivery, and yet this

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1. "Critical Essays, etc." Appendix, p. 2.

2. Idem. Appendix, pp. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10.

3. Idem, 45, 166, 175, and Appendix 21.

4. Idem, 179, 209.



complications of negative qualities finds means to be clapped in the theatre." And here, according to Mr. Hunt, is the unfailing method of obtaining a clap. "It consists in nothing more, than in gradually raising the voice as the speech draws to a conclusion, making an alarming outcry on the last four or five lines, or suddenly dropping them into a tremulous but energetic undertone, and with a vigorous jerk of the right arm rushing off the stage. All this astonishes the galleries; they are persuaded it must be something very fine, because it is so important and so unintelligible, and they clap for the sake of their own reputation.<sup>1</sup>

... Mr. Pope has but two gestures, which follow each other in monotonous alternation, like the jerks of a toy-shop harlequin: one is a mere extension of the arms, and is used on all occasions of candour, of acknowledgement, of remonstrance, and of explanation; the other for occasions of vehemence or of grandeur, is an elevation of the arms, like the gesture of Raphael's "St. Paul Preaching at Athens," an action which becomes the more absurd on common occasions, from its real sublimity."<sup>2</sup>

In much the same way that Hunt criticises Mr. Pope's two gestures, he criticises his two facial expressions: one "a flat indifference which is used on all sober occasions, and an angry frown which is used on all impassioned ones."

# 1.

1. This thrust at the audience makes one wish that Hunt were alive to "current-comment" on the Washington Conference and the public thanks-giving festivals decreed in honor of it. Gullibility ranging the haunts of men can still find signs of "Rooms to let."
2. "Critical Essays, etc." pages 22, 23, 24,





But Mr. Hunt never entirely loses sight of his underlying purpose in criticism. He set out to praise what was worthy of praise; and although he had no respect for error, however long it had been established, or for vanity however long endured; he was ever ready to admire dignity that was not pedantic, pathos that was not artificial, gesture that did not suggest machinery, expression that was more than paint and lamplight; he looked for the laughter that had heart in it, charm that radiated sincerity, modesty that demanded respect, and vivacity that inspired wholesome hearty amusement. About such qualities as these he was eager to write with warmth and generosity. He pointed out the "mingling of heart with humour" that Mr. Bannister enacted; he paid tribute to the "virtue and respectability" that Miss Duncan possessed; he admired the "simple passion and mixed emotion of anger and tenderness, and testiness of good-hearted old age" that distinguished Mr. Dowton; he indulged the "liveliness, social vivacity, and dry humor" assumed by Mr. Elliston; and he pays tribute to the "charming openness and gaiety" of Mrs. Jordan, whose "voice pregnant with melody, delights the ear with a peculiar and exquisite fulness, and with an emphasis that appears the result of perfect conviction... Her laughter is the happiest and most natural on the stage;" ... it is as natural as emotion itself, and "intermingles itself with her words, as fresh ideas afford her fresh merriment; she does not so much seem to indulge as she seems unable to help it; it increases, it lessens with her fancy, and when you expect it no longer according to the usual habit of the stage, it sparkles forth at little intervals, as recollection re-



vives it, like flame from the half smothered embers."

The temptation to quote further in illustration of Mr. Hunt's felicity in the art of praising is not easily denied; although long passages of such hearty approval as this from which we have extracted a brief quotation, are few, not because Mr. Hunt found it difficult to praise, but because he saw so little worth praising. One need only compare what he says of Mrs. Jordan with what he wrote about Mr. Pope to be convinced that he was more at home in approving than in condemning. Picking out what was beautiful to look upon, heartening to contemplate, fortifying to emulate was the whole vocation and avocation to Leigh Hunt. As already explained, he does not blame the actors alone. He thinks responsibility for correcting authors for representation rests with the managers of theatres. He laments the perpetual representation of wretched dramas whose genius rests entirely upon their immorality, because they are hurtful to the immediate reputation of the actors. He regrets that he has been compelled to draw examples of good acting from ~~from~~ the worst dramas. But the hope that he may have been of service by assisting the improvement of his own age in play writing and acting has encouraged him to exercise his best powers, such as they are, against the barbarities of modern comedy. "Succeeding ages very often acquire an unconscious tone from the most trifling exertions. Like the child who was awakened every morning by his father's flute, they rise in the calm possession of their powers, unconscious of the favorable impulse that has been given them." Modern dramatic criticism may not be conscious of the favorable impulse given it by Leigh Hunt, but the power and





whatever sanity, independence, and sincerity it may possess was first fostered by him.

A paragraph of self-appraisal from ~~Mr.~~ Hunt may help us in placing a right estimate upon his ability as a critic of matters theatrical. In speaking of the attacks that were made upon him for his criticisms, he says that they

"...were little calculated to obtain their end with a youth who persuaded himself that he wrote for nothing but the public food; who mistook the impression that anybody with moderate talents can make with a newspaper, for the result of something peculiarly his own; and who had just enough scholarship to despise the want of it in others." He does not pretend to think that the criticisms in the "News" had no merit, but believes that the "pains he took to round off a period with nothing in it, or to invent a simile that should appear offhand, would have done honour to better stuff." In speaking of the volume entitled "Critical Essays on the Performers of the London Theatres", he says, "I have the book now before me: and if I thought it had a chance of survival I should regret and qualify a good deal of uninformed judgment in it respecting the art of acting, which, with much inconsistent recommendation to the contrary, it too often confounded with a literal, instead of a liberal imitation of nature."<sup>1</sup>

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1. "Autobiography," edited by his son, 1860. p. 143, 144.



## VI

## INDICATOR AND TASTER

Critical and aesthetic appreciation. Imagination and Fancy. Critical estimates. "What is Poetry"? --Details and examples. "Wit and Humour". "a jewel case of criticisms." Character of the two books. The conclusion. "Who still rules our spirit from his urn.

From dramatic to literary criticism was the natural and easy direction for the genius of Leigh Hunt to take. Everything that his mind occupied itself with, which was not literature in some form, had for him only such interest as inheres in stepping stones: useful to get from where one is to where one wants to go. All his life he had been an inclusive reader, and a discriminating one. He never failed as an intelligent appreciator of what was good in books, and especially in poetry. Of its imagination and fancy, its sweetness and its music, its tenderness and its grace, its wit and its humour, no better judge ever existed than Leigh Hunt, and no critic ever pointed them out with rarer skill.

Among those who have given high rank to Leigh Hunt are not only his ardent admirers, but also his grudging critics. Lowell thinks that Hunt's "subtlety of discrimination" and sound judgment "has hardly won fitting appreciation." Macaulay, besides feeling a "kindness" for Hunt, credits him with the power of "justly appreciating and heartily enjoying good things of very different kinds." "A commentator on the minute beauties of poetry," is Whipple's es-





timate of him. Saintsbury grants that, in the faculty of literary criticism, Hunt is "with all his drawbacks, on a level with Coleridge, with Lamb, and with Hazlitt, his defects as compared with them being in each case made up by compensatory or more than compensatory merits." Winchester, commenting on Hunt's critical writings, deems "his contributions to literary theory by no means insignificant." Undoubtedly Hunt had considerable power of analysis and definition, as well as ability to taste and to indicate what was good in literature. The best single example of this is, perhaps, the introductory essay to the volume aptly entitled "Imagination and Fancy." According to Winchester, this essay, entitled "What is Poetry?" "is, on the whole, as satisfactory an answer to that question as any more recent writer has been able to give us...the essay is full of the most acute and discriminating remarks. His discussion of the value of musical sensibility in verse, of the difference between smoothness and sweetness, of the effect of variety in accent, of alliteration and assonance, his distinction between natural and prosaic,--which very neatly punctures the fallacy in Wordsworth's famous preface,-- these among other passages, may be cited as proof of the delicacy and justice of his taste when dealing with general principles." Mr. Brimley Johnson states that Leigh Hunt's critical work, all that is directly so, is confined almost entirely to prefaces. This statement, we presume, is true when the judgment it pronounces got its direction from Mr. Johnson's "directly so." Our own preference, however, is for the two volumes entitled respectively, "Imagination and Fancy," and "Wit and Humour."

"Imagination and Fancy" is first among the likeable things that Leigh Hunt has done in the way of criticism. The little volume



was hapily christened: under its title almost anything other than the dull and prosaic might be discussed. But what it actually does include may be briefly summarized. The volume of three hundred and fifteen pages consists of an essay on "What Is Poetry?" extending to sixty-one pages, and a series of quotations from the poets of England whom the world has agreed to call great, namely, Spenser, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Milton, Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats. Each set of quotations is prefaced by a short critical notice of the poet from whom they are taken; and those expressions to which Mr. Hunt wishes to call special attention are printed in italics (this is Mr. Hunt's usual way of "indicating"), and after most of the pieces quoted he has placed notes, intended either to clear up the meaning where it is obscure, or to point out lurking beauties.

From this description of the volume we may readily conclude that it is not the ordinary anthology. It is that, but it is more. We may call it an anthology in the sense that here we have a collection of delectable extracts from the best English poets; but it is more in that Leigh Hunt, like the Cuculus Indicator of his own periodical, hovers over the specimens in the volume, and by means of his critical introductions, and chatty notes in conclusion, points out to us the honey spots. Herein, indeed, lies the strength of Leigh Hunt's critical service. Critics too often talk for an audience that does not need their instruction. Readers who can understand the critics (many of them) can also understand the authors criticised, and make up their minds about them. Readers who cannot understand authors, cannot understand the critics either. Why not, it may be asked, leave the authors who have nothing worth praising





alone? Instead of spending time decrying the worthless, give more attention to pointing the hesitating reader to the beauties of literature. That, at least was Hunt's belief; and he not only opened a way of enjoyment for the general reader, but he enriched literature by the encouragement he gave contemporary writers.

With a little encouragement our imagination and fancy can picture Leigh Hunt at his favorite fireside, talking with friends, two or three, perhaps more. Now and then he picks up a volume from the table and reads. It is a favorite passage, from a favorite author, to be sure, and therefore fit subject for illuminating remarks. They will not always be in approval, but his general purpose is to praise; for he has chosen to read what he likes. So in this volume. It presents a sort of fireside reading and running comment. But merely to present passages of poetry particularly pleasing to Hunt, was not the primary object of the volume. Its purpose was more serious, more critical.

One of the objects of the book, we are told in the Preface, was to show "what sort of poetry is to be considered as poetry of the most poetical kind, or such as exhibits the imagination and fancy in a state of predominance, undisputed by interests of another sort." And by a careful perusal of the introductory essay, "What is Poetry?" we learn that poetry and meter are not the same thing; and further, that poetry is something different from the metrical expression of even great thoughts. He insists that we may quote from Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, and other great poets, hundreds of passages which are soul-stirring without being strictly poetical; that the passages in a poem most pregnant with mind and



meaning, most agitating in its effects, and most decisive in its testimony to the genius of the author, may yet have less of the essence of poetry in it than many inferior passages.

In answer to the question, What class of poetry is the highest? Mr. Hunt says, "undoubtedly, the Epic." Then, after mentioning Homer, Shakespeare, Dante, Milton, Chaucer, Spenser, Ariosto, he continues:

"...It is to be borne in mind, however, that the first poet of an inferior class may be superior to followers in the train of a higher one, though the superiority is by no means to be taken for granted; otherwise Pope would be superior to Fletcher, and Butler to Pope. Imagination, teeming with action and character, makes the greatest poets; feeling and thought the next; fancy (by itself) the next; with the last. Thought by itself makes no poet at all; for the mere conclusions of the understanding can at best be only so many intellectual matters of fact. Feeling, even destitute of conscious thought, stands a far better poetical chance; feeling being a sort of thought without the process of thinking,--a grasper of the truth without seeing it. And what is very remarkable, feeling seldom makes the blunders that thought does."<sup>1</sup>

Writers may be conveniently referred to one of three classes according as they make it their principal business to expound doctrines, to stimulate to action, or to do something which we can as yet only describe by saying that it is different from either. It is only poetry belonging to this, the third class, that Mr. Hunt

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1. Imagination and Fancy, p. 55





has admitted to this collection. With a little reflection we may prognosticate the nature of his selections. Will they be well known passages? Will they be those lines, couplets, stanzas which are often quoted in public assemblies, and made to do duty at banquets, and in the halls of political bodies where nations are leagued, belligerents are disarmed, navies are scrapped, and people are protected? Beautiful expressions devoid of lulling effect on human conduct, and unforgettable echoes of infinite things, these have little appeal for the average person whose pleasure it is to humour whims and prejudices for his own gain. Hudibras, for example, which supplies (or supplied) plenty of quotations, would not be called poetry by its staunchest advocate. Such a passage as

"What makes all doctrines plain and clear?

About two hundred pounds a year.

And that which was proved true before,

Prove false again? Two hundred more."

may be convincing enough, may have rhyme and reason, but certainly has no poetical appeal. Neither have the vehement jealous outburst of Othello, the ironical cynicisms of Iago, the fulminations of Milton's Satan, the rantings of Don Juan, the philosophizing of Browning's "Rabi Ben Ezra," nor the criticisms in Pope's "Essay on Man." In all such as these that have been enumerated, the appeal is to something other than to the purely poetical. What the average person wants is a proverb of the "Poor Richard" type, a passion torn to tatters, or a prejudice well spoken. But jingling proverbs, full mouthed passions, and pet prejudices are not poetry.

But coming back to "Imagination and Fancy" we find in it



what Mr. Hunt calls "poetry in its element, like essence distilled, as different from that which we call poetry in its compound state, that is, poetry which appeals to a variety of emotional and intellectual attributes." Examples of "poetry in its element, like essence distilled" are, according to Mr. Hunt,

"It ceased; yet still the sails made on  
 A pleasant noise till noon--  
 A noise like <sup>of</sup> a hidden brook  
 In the leafy month of June,  
 That to the sleeping woods all night  
 Singeth a quiet tune."

The happiest instance he finds of the great importance that imagination in all its phases is in the highest poetic faculty is the passage in which Shakespeare describes the moonlight "sleeping" on the bank.

"How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank;  
 Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music  
 Creep into our ears; soft stillness, and the night,  
 Become the touches of sweet harmony.  
 ... Look, how the floor of heaven  
 Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold;

Some idea of Hunt's conception of poetry has already been given; but it may not be amiss to quote his definition. "Poetry," he says, "strictly and artistically so called, that is to say, considered not merely as poetic feeling, which is more or less shared by all the world, but as the operation of that feeling, such as we see in the poet's book, is the utterance of a passion for truth,





beauty, and power, embodying and illustrating its conceptions by imagination and fancy, and modulating its language on the principle of variety in uniformity. Its means are whatever the universe contains; and its ends, pleasure and exaltation."

Life, it seems, is a process of forging conventions; and it is poetry, according to Hunt, that keeps us from becoming entirely imprisoned in their soporiferous compacts. Like love and beauty, poetry touches nature's clouds to glory for us. A proper interpretation, both of his definition and the selections in the volume, will discover the fact that the entire collection is an illustration of the definition, and that exaltation and pleasure will help us to "go softly" between, among, and by the conventions that hedge us in from nature. A lover of Spenser always, it is quite natural that Hunt should select him as the first exponent of his definition.

..."Spenser's great characteristic is poetic luxury."

Hunt thinks that "If you go to him for a story, you will be disappointed; if for style, classical or concise, the point against him is conceded; if for pathos, you must weep for personages half-real and too beautiful; if for mirth, you must laugh out of good breeding, and because it pleaseth the great, sequestered man to be facetious. But if you love poetry well enough to enjoy it for its own sake, let no evil reports of his "allegory" deter you from his acquaintance, for great will be your loss. His allegory itself is but one part allegory, and nine parts beauty and enjoyment; sometimes an excess of flesh and blood. His forced rhymes, and his sentences written to fill up, which



in a less poet would be intolerable, are compared with such endless grace and dreaming pleasure, fit to

'make heaven drowsy with the harmony.'

Spenser is more "southern than the south itself"; he is constantly "haunted with the sense of beauty," and all his versification is "perpetual music." Critics born of the earth may not find his poetry to fit their rules, also born of earth; but poets themselves have idolized and imitated him more than any other poet has ever been idolized and imitated; and all "the gods are ravished with delight" by his celestial song, and the wondrous might of his music.

In the selections that follow the critical remarks, ~~Mr.~~ Hunt first points out the exquisite modulation, the noble sentiment, and the tone quality of "Archimago's Hermitage." Next he shows us in the "Cave of Mammon" what Hazlitt has called the "portentous massiveness of the forms, the splendid chiaro-scuro and shadowy horror." Then we are brought to a "Galery of Pictures from Spenser," which Hunt considers, and concludes thereby that Spenser is the poet of painters, and also the painter-poet. To each of the pictures in this "Spenser-Gallery" Mr. Hunt has attached the name of the painters whose genius the poem reminds him of. There are nineteen such pictures; but only two of them are here quoted. The first one, entitled "Hope," is, according to Hunt, such a picture as Corregio might have painted. It has, so he says, sweetness, but is without devotion.

With him went Hope, in rank, a handsome maid,  
Of cheerful look, and lovely to behold;





In silken samite she was light arrayed,  
 And her fair locks were woven up in gold.  
 She alway smiled;--and in her hand did hold  
 An holy-water sprinkle dipp'd in dew,  
 With which she sprinkled favors manifold  
 On whom she list, and did great liking shew;  
 Great liking unto many, but true love to few.

Of the verse "And her fair locks, etc." Hunt says, "What a lovely line is that! and with a beauty how simple and sweet is the sentiment portrayed in the next three words,--'She always smiled!'" Almost every line, however, is lovely to Hunt, and especially so is the felicitous Catholic image of the

Holy-water sprinkle dipp'd with dew.

If Corregio isn't in every color and expression of the whole picture, then Hunt does not know where to find it.

Here is the second selection, entitled

#### A PLUME OF FEATHERS AND AN ALMOND TREE

Upon the top of all this lovely crest  
 A bunch of hairs discolour'd diversly,  
 With sprinkl'd pearl and gold full richly dress'd,  
 Did shake and seem to dance for jolity.  
 Like to an almond tree, ymounted high,  
 On top of green Selinis all alone,  
 With blossoms brave hedecked daintily,  
 Whose tender locks do tremble every one,  
 At every little breath that under heaven is blown.



"What an exquisite last line! exclaims Hunt. But he finds fault with the poem as a whole, and says it is not a description fit for a picture. The accessories needed for a good picture are not here; and the reference to the image illustrated is not good or true. There is a feeling of too much minuteness and closeness in the very distance. Besides it is quite impossible to paint the tender locks "every one," and the whisper of "every little breath."

These two, one a good the other a poor example of what Hunt calls painted poems, have been quoted to illustrate Hunt's criticism, and to show wherein he distinguishes between what he calls good and not good portrait poetry. It would be diverting, at least to quote others, but the two must suffice; enough these two, we believe, to prove that the book is not a vague panegyric or second-hand rapture, but an intelligent, discriminating comment on good literature. He not only relishes a beautiful poem, but he explains the mystery of its mechanism, the witchery of its peculiar harmonies, and the intense force of words when used in certain combinations, and properly understood by the reader. That kind of critical service, we think, is much more effective than the coldly impersonal pronouncements of the intellectuals. The rule of the ancients as such, does not much concern, certainly does not interest the people who should be led to reading poetry. Hunt's is the "shaping intellect"; his is the magic index-hand that points down the highway of Time, a thousand years back, that touches our lips with laughter, and sometimes compels us to tears.

Each set of selections from Spenser, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Middleton, Decker and Webster,





Milton, Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats is prefaced by a short critical notice. In the selections which he quotes, Hunt has indicated his preference of particular lines or passages by italics. The reason for italicising (a device much deplored by certain critics, and designated by them as "signpost" criticism), Hunt informs us, was a desire on his part to meet the wishes of those who desired the italics. Hunt himself, "begs to be considered as having marked the passages in no spirit of dictation to anyone." Most of all, we imagine, not to the critics. That, we think, would not be showing due respect for their individual opinions. For the wandering, half-lost layman on the highroad of poetry, signposts do not come amiss; they may not lead to the four-square City of Appreciation, but they lead to the outposts of Understanding at least.

The whole book is a sincere effort to have his readers see, as he sees, that everything which is deemed most justly human, as Hope, Love, and Reverence, can best be understood through the poetic strains of "the dead but sceptered sovereigns, who still rule our spirits from their urns."

"Wit and Humour," the companion volume to "Imagination and Fancy," exhibits as much care in the choice, and contains almost as good a collection of extracts, as the volume we have just discussed. In "Wit and Humour," as in "Imagination and Fancy," his sympathies, vivid and easily won, were, nevertheless, held in check, balanced and directed by his impartial judgment. The contents of these two volumes are precisely what suggested to Charles Lamb the word "Indicator" as fit title for Leigh Hunt. The selections in "Wit and Humour," with their prefatory notices of each poet in-



cluded, their critical, explanatory notes, and their italics indicating Hunt's favorite lines, appeal to us exactly as if Hunt himself should take from his shelves the works of the authors represented, and read to us the passages he has marked, emphasizing with voice and gesture what he liked best, and interpreting the whole with brief, graceful, illuminating comments. Reading his marked books we can, if we will, get a double pleasure: we may laugh with him or at him. In most cases, however, our attitude will be like his was. There will be a grim satisfaction at the biting irony and acute wit of Swift and Butler; the macaronic nonsense of Drummond will be a common enjoyment; both of us will accept the liberal-thinking joviality of Chaucer, condone the wilful and superabundant folly, "humoured to the top of its bent" of Beaumont and Fletcher, be vivacious with Suckling's dairy maid compliments, run riot with Marvel's extravagance, ward off low spirits with the wit, reflection, and good sense of Green, let the amiableness and "bonhomie" of Goldsmith lead us to comedy running into farce; and at the end of the volume be mirthful with Wolcot's occasional mock-heroic inversions.

And here it may not come amiss to call attention once more to Leigh Hunt's critical method. In speaking of Wolcot's mock-heroic inversions, Hunt says, "To compare great things with small, and show that I commend nothing strongly which has not had a strong effect on myself, I can say, that Lear does not more surely move me to tears, or Spenser charm me, than I am thrown into fits of laughter when I hear these rhyming (mock-heroic inversions) 'Johnsonia.' I can hardly, now at this moment, while writing about them, and glancing at the copy which lies before me, help laughing





to myself in private."

It is this confessional characteristic that makes Leigh Hunt the admirable "taster" of literature which James Haney has called him. And here in "Wit and Humour", a "jewel case", as Lord Jeffrey called it, Hunt has been at his best. But all the jewels are by no means in the extracts only. Many of ~~Mr.~~ Hunt's comments are gems in their own settings. Especially worth noting is the little miniature of Pope. "The little fragile creature had wings; and he could expand them at will, and ascend, if to no great imaginative heights, yet to charming fairy circles, just above those of the world about him, disclosing enchanting visions at the top of the drawing room, and enabling us to see the spirits that wait on coffee-cups and hoop-petticoats."

Of necessity the limits set for the two volumes, "Imagination and Fancy," and "Wit and Humour," dictated that the notices of the various poets included should all be brief, mere pipefulls at best; but they are of a flavor to whet the taste. Altogether, both are charming volumes in style and content, displaying a goodly share of the "harvest home" of Hunt's critical acumen, his mature and deliberate opinion of his favorite poets expressed in a spirit of genial criticism, delicate and discriminating. In a leisurely perusal of the two books we feel as if passing through a banquet hall where wit and humour are at repartee, weighing words against each other; and after we have loitered to catch an echo here, have stopped to ponder a covert quip elsewhere, and have at last come to where we may look over our shoulder in retrospect, we are not quite sure whether what we have been hearing was the chuck-



le of cunning and vulgar acuteness, the roar of obstreperous jollity, the compact of imagination and fancy playing with good fellowship in the Forest of Arden; or whether we have been listening to the Gargantuan laughter of those who mock at creatures of divine intelligence tied to a belly that must be fed, and hearing the intoxicated laughter of revelers at a feast where invisible hands are forever writing on the wall. But be it the one or the other, sure we are that Mr. Hunt has given us a feast. Are we of those who stand aside, looking critically at life as a procession of amusing figures? Then the books are full of laughter and comedy. But are we of those quick with keen feeling and alert with intelligent sympathy; then the books have in them the substance of tears and tragedy. Apart from the coloring which individual moods may lend to them, the imagination and the fancy, the wit and the humour which we find in them are excellent; they are full of the essence of all the good sayings of all the wits and humourists who have laughed their way into the hearts of men.

As we have progressed toward the end of our pleasant stay with Leigh Hunt, we have come to feel very strongly that his place in English literature is a singularly high one. We have felt at times that he is not appreciated as is his due. This lack of estimating him at his real worth is probably due to the wide field which his writings cover. A little less of what was for the passing moment only would, perhaps, have won him greater recognition. But with necessity at the door, choice to limit his field was not given him. Meanwhile let us accept him for what he did. At his best none has surpassed him in kind. He was never supreme as were certain of his contemporaries; but there was one thing in which





he ranked first: in the imaginative glow and warmth and kindliness of his desire to open doors, and to lead us out of the prosaic life of every-day, and enable us to forget the dulness and the meanness of the actual. It was his purpose to give wings to our imagination, and to set the winds of inspiration blowing; for it was his conviction that along whatever wondrous trail the awakened love of Beauty might finally wing its way, that love must have a start. To show us where it might begin, to point out the places where the imagination of others had taken wing was the supreme pleasure and profit of his critical service.

He made no pretension to having discovered continents of originality, or new fields of inspiration. Indeed he believed in no separation whatever between them. The dulness of the actual and the beauty of the ideal are closely compacted to make the isthmus that stretches between two eternities. What we hope to become, and what we long to possess, strike their roots deeply into what we once were, and what once we claimed as our own. There is no safety, even were there a possibility, in cutting loose from the old. But because we can possess it only through individual experiences, the old will always be new. It is to this experience that Hunt would give us the wings of imagination, so that we might see and love, and love because we saw, the oldest things in their unspent beauty. Leigh Hunt had a theory that Love, Hope, and Faith in humanity, and Reverence, Beauty, and Service to all are the two trinities before whose shrine the heart should worship. If he reasoned at all it was with his heart. With his heart he loved, and laughed, and lived, and moved; in it he found the world of his fellowmen.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Several fairly satisfactory bibliographies of Leigh Hunt and his works have been compiled. To four of these, which taken together, include practically everything published by Hunt, the present writer has had access. The references not given in the bibliographies described below are included in the "List of Books and Other Items Used in the Preparation of this Thesis." The four bibliographies referred to are, in the order of publication, as follows:

Ireland, Alexander "List of the Writings of William Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt, Chronologically arranged; with notes descriptive, critical, and explanatory; and a selection of opinions regarding their genius and characteristics, by distinguished contemporaries and friends, as well as by subsequent critics; preceded by a review of, and extracts from, Barry Cornwall's "Memorials of Charles Lamb;" with a few words on William Hazlitt and his writings, and a chronological list of the works of Charles Lamb." Two hundred copies printed by John Russell Smith. London. 1868.

The sections in this volume of particular interest to students of Hunt are,

1. Opinions regarding Leigh Hunt's character, genius, and writings.
2. Chronological list of the writings of Leigh





Hunt; with notes, descriptive, critical, and explanatory.

3. Thomas Carlyle on Leigh Hunt.

4. Specimens of criticisms on Leigh Hunt and his writings; from the early volumes of "The Quarterly Review" and "Blackwood's Magazine."

Johnson, Brimley R. "The Poems of Leigh Hunt." London. 1891.

The volume contains a classified list of Hunt's writings, an index, books wrongly attributed to Leigh Hunt, and a list of portraits, arranged as follows:

1. Newspapers projected and edited by Leigh Hunt. Eleven entries.
2. Contributions to Other Periodicals. Twenty-five entries.
3. Essays: Collected. Twenty entries.
4. London Guide Books. Three entries.
5. Various Prose Works. Nine entries.
6. Selections from Other Writers and Critical Biographies. Fifteen entries.
7. Poetry: Separate Poems. Eight entries.
8. Poetry: Collected. Twelve entries.
9. Dramatic Pieces. Seven entries. Three of these were never published.
10. Fragments. Two entries.
11. Manuscripts. Six entries.



12. Index to Bibliography Chronologically Arranged.

13. Books Wrongly Attributed to Leigh Hunt. Six entries.

14. List of Portraits. Fourteen entries.

Monkhouse, Cosmo. "Life of Leigh Hunt." London. 1893.

1. Poetical Works: Collected, nine entries; separate editions, fifteen entries.

2. Prose Works. Thirty two entries.

3. Selections, Etc. Seven entries.

4. Books, Magazines, Etc., Edited by Leigh Hunt. Twenty entries.

5. Dramatic Works. Four entries.

6. Contributions to Other Magazines, Etc. Twenty-seven magazines, etc. listed.

7. Appendix, containing:

a. Biography, Criticism, Etc.

b. Magazine Articles, Etc.

8. Chronological List of Works. Sixty-nine entries.

Ingpen, Roger. "Autobiography of Leigh Hunt." Edited by Roger Ingpen. 2 vols. Westminster. Archibald Constable and Co. Ltd. 1903. Volume II contains (pages 273-299) a chronological list of books written or edited by Leigh Hunt. The poetical works are printed in Italics, the prose in Roman type, and





the reprinted articles in small type. Each entry is followed by at least a title page description, and where the nature of the item described requires it, a table of contents is given. There are sixty-nine entries, inclusive from 1801 to 1891. The chronological table in volume I, and the numerous foot-notes in both volumes are valuable for dates and other matters of fact and opinion. But dates are not to be relied upon without question.

The six items that follow are not listed in any of the bibliographies which have come under the present writer's notice. Other items not included here are listed in the "Addendum."

- Brewer, Luther A. "Around the Library Table." This little book of fifty pages is entertainingly informing about rare and interesting items in the author's collection of Hunt material. It also contains one hitherto unpublished essay by Hunt. Cedar Rapids.
- Fields, Mrs. J.T. "A Shelf of Old Books." Contains gossip and interesting side lights on Hunt and his books.
- Harper, H. H. "Byron's Malach Hamoves." A somewhat arbitrary and prejudiced attack on Leigh Hunt.
- Johnson, R. B. "Leigh Hunt." A biographical sketch and critical estimate by an admirer of Hunt.
- Starrett, Vincent "A Student of Catalogs." The "Foreward" by Luther A. Brewer deals with Hunt. Cedar Rapids, Iowa. 1921.



LIST OF BOOKS AND OTHER ITEMS USED IN THE  
PREPARATION OF THIS THESIS

The following list contains only those titles which have been used in the present study of Leigh Hunt. I have made two groups, the first group containing books by Leigh Hunt, the second selected titles of biography and criticism.

I

Hunt, Leigh. Autobiography. New edition, edited by his eldest son.

Published by Smith Elder. 1880.

Autobiography. Edited by Roger Ingpen. 2 volumes, Westminster, Archibald Constable & Co. Ltd. 1903. A similar edition was also published by Dutton, N.Y. 1903.

The Book of the Sonnet. 2 volumes, Boston, 1869.

Correspondence. 2 volumes. Edited by his eldest son. London, 1862.

The Descent of Liberty, A Mask. London, 1816.

Critical Essays on the Performance of the London Theaters, London, 1807.

Dramatic Essays, selected and edited by Wm. Archer and Robert Lowe. London. 1894.

Essays, edited by R. B. Johnson. London. 1891

The Examiner, A Sunday Paper on Politics, Domestic Economy, and Theatricals. Motto: "Party is the madness of the many for the gain of the few." Swift.

The Feast of the Poets, Second edition, Amended and enlarged. London, 1815.





Imagination and Fancy, or selections from the English poets illustrative of those first requisites of their art, with markings of the best passages, critical notices of the writers and an essay in answer to the question, "What is Poetry?" First published in 1844. Reprinted 1845, 1852; a cheap edition, 1870. The Indicator. Motto: "A dram of sweet is worth a pound of sour."

Oct. 13th, 1819--March 21st, 1821; bound in 2 vols. 1821.

A Jar of Honey from Mount Hybla. Smith Elder. 1897.

The Literary Examiner. London. 1823.

Leigh Hunt's Journal. 1 vol. 1850-51.

Leigh Hunt's London Journal. April 2, 1834--Dec. 31, 1835.

Bound in 2 vols.

Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries. London, 1828.

Men, Women, and Books. Smith Elder, London, 1870.

The Months; description of the successive beauties of the year. London, 1821.

The Old Court Suburb; or, Memories of Kensington, regal, critical, and anecdotal. London, 1855 and 1860.

Poetical Works. Now finally collected, revised by himself, and edited by his son, Thornton Hunt, with illustrations by Corbould, 1860. Not in any way complete, with no plays,

The Reflector. 2 vols. London, 1811.

The Seer; or, Common-places refreshed. 2 vols. in 1. 4th edition. Boston, 1865.

The Reformist's Answer to an article entitled "State Parties," in the last Edinburgh Review (No. 30) by the Editor of the Examiner, in which paper it first appeared. London, 1819.

Stories from the Italian Poets. London. 1846.



The Story of Rimini, a poem. London, 1816, 1817, etc.

Table-Talk, to which are added conversations of Pope and Swift.

Smith Elder, 1870.

The Town, Its Memorable characters and events. London, 1859.

The Wishing Cap Papers. Boston, 1873.

Wit and Humour, London, Smith Elder, 1846.

## II

### BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL

I have not included in the following list the numerous magazine articles consulted in the pursuit of this study; nor have I thought it worth while to refer to the scores of paragraph or page references in the biographies, journals, letters, etc. of Hunt's contemporaries. Many such references may be found in the bibliography at the end of the volume by Monkhouse.

Archer and Lowe, Dramatic Essays; selected with notes and an Introduction. 1894.

Clarke, Charles and Mary, Recollections of Writers. London, 1878.

Caine, T. Hall, Cobwebs and Criticism. 1883.

Fields, Mrs. Annie, A Shelf of Old Books, 1894. Also in Scribners Magazine, III:285-305.

Hazlitt, Wm. Spirit of the Age. London, 1858. Also in World Classics

Horne, R. H. A New Spirit of the Age; World Classics edition.

Johnson, R. B. Leigh Hunt, 1896.

Kent, W. C. M. Leigh Hunt as Poet and Essayist. Introduction and portrait, 1889. Gives original source of everything reprinted.

Miller, Barnette, Leigh Hunt's Relation with Byron, Shelley, and Keats. Columbia University Study in English. 1910.





Mitford, Mary Russell. Recollections of a Literary Life. 1852.

Monkhouse, Cosmo, Life of Leigh Hunt. 1893.

Moulton, C. W. The Library of Literary Criticism. VI:153-172.

Noble, James A. The Sonnet in England, and Other Essays. 1896.

Saintsbury, George, History of Criticism. III: 246-49.

Saintsbury, George, Essays in English Literature 1780-1860.

London, 1891.

Symons, Arthur, Essays by Leigh Hunt. Edited with introduction and notes. In the Camelot Series.

Trelawney, E. J. Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron. Oxford, 1906.

Trelawney, E. J. Records of Shelley, Byron and the Author. The New Universal Library. Routledge.

Ward's English Poets. In volume IV. Introduction by Dowden.

Williams, Orlo. The Essay. Art and Craft of Letters Series.

Winbolt, S. E. Coleridge, Lamb and Leigh Hunt. London, Bryce. 1920.

From the Preface of this volume we learn that the author has attempted to put together in one volume the best pieces in prose and poetry of these three best representatives of Christ Hospital. He has endeavored also to weave together the strands of the lives and works of the three, and to show to what a remarkable extent the whole lives of these schoolfellows were interdependent and colored by early school associations and by the friendships that grew from them.



BIBLIOGRAPHY OF LEIGH HUNT'S WRITINGS  
CHRONOLOGICALLY ARRANGED

- 1801           Juvenilia
- 1801           Poem in European Magazine
- 1801, etc. Poems in Poetical Register
- 1802           Essay in Monthly Preceptor
- 1804-5         Papers in Traveller
- 1805           Theatrical Criticism in News
- 1807           Theatrical Criticism in Times
- 1807           Critical Essays on London Theatres
- 1807           Classic Tales
- 1808           The Examiner
- 1808-9         Three Songs. Published separately, set to music
- 1809           Methodism
- 1810           The Reflector
- 1810           Reformist's Answer to Edinburg Review. No. 30
- 1811           Report of Proceedings against John Hunt and  
Leigh Hunt. Printed at Stamford.
- 1812           Report on the Trial of John and Leigh Hunt, with  
Observations on the Trial by the Editor of the  
Examiner. These observations are dated Dec. 13,  
1812, Dec. 20, 1812, Dec. 27, 1812, Jan. 9, 1813.
- 1814           Feast of the Poets
- 1815           Descent of Liberty
- 1816           Story of Rimini
- 1817           Round Table (Published in Hazlitt's works)





|            |   |
|------------|---|
| 1818       | Foliage                                     |
| 1819-22    | Literary Pocket-Book                        |
| 1819       | Poetical Works                              |
| 1819       | Hero and Leander, and Bacchus and Ariadne   |
| 1819       | The Indicator                               |
| 1820       | Amyntas                                     |
| 1821       | The Months                                  |
| 1821, etc. | New Monthly Magazine (contributed to)       |
| 1822       | The Liberal                                 |
| 1823       | The Literary Examiner                       |
| 1823       | Ultra-Crepidarius                           |
| 1825       | Bacchus in Tuscany                          |
| 1828       | Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries   |
| 1828       | The Companion                               |
| 1828       | The Keepsake                                |
| 1830       | Chat of the Week                            |
| 1830-2     | The Tatler, a Daily                         |
| 1832       | Christianism                                |
| 1832       | Sir Ralph Esher                             |
| 1832       | Poetical Works                              |
| 1832-3     | Year of Honeymoons in Bull's Court Magazine |
| 1833       | Papers in the True Sun                      |
| 1833       | Wishing Cap in Tait's Magazine              |
| 1834       | Indicator and Companion                     |
| 1834-5     | Leigh Hunt's London Journal                 |
| 1835       | Captain Sword and Captain Pen               |
| 1837       | Articles in Westminster Review              |
| 1837-8     | Monthly Repository                          |



|        |   |
|--------|---|
| n.d.   | Blue Stocking Revels <sup>1</sup>   |
| 1838-9 | Articles in the Monthly Chronicle   |
| 1839   | Articles in Musical World   |
| 1839   | Tales in Romancist and Novelist's Library   |
| 1840   | Heads of the People   |
| 1840   | Legend of Florence  |
| 1840   | Wycherley, Congreve, Vanburg, and Farquhar edited   |
| 1840   | Sheridan, Preface to  |
| 1840-1 | The Seer  |
| 1841   | Chaucer modernized  |
| 1841   | Articles in Monthly Chronicle   |
| 1841-4 | Articles in Edinburg Review   |
| 1842   | The Palfrey   |
| 1842   | Poem in Monthly Magazine  |
| 1843*  | Hundred Romances of Real Life   |
| 1844   | Jar of Honey, in Ainsworth's Magazine   |
| 1844*  | Poetical Works  |
| 1844   | Rimini and other poems  |
| 1844*  | Imagination and Fancy   |
| 1845   | Poems in Ainsworth's Magazine   |
| 1845   | Preface to Foster Brothers  |
| 1846*  | Wit and Humour  |
| 1846*  | Stories from Italian Poets ( Selections only<br>in print; The New Universal Library, Routledge) |

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\* Titles that are starred are still in print.

1. First published in the Monthly Repository. Hunt says it was a kind of female "Feast of the Poets," (See Ingpen, II:220)





- 1846            Table Talk in Atlas
- 1847\*          Men, Women and Books
- 1848\*          Jar of Honey from Mount Hybla
- 1848\*          The Town
- 1849            Book for a Corner
- 1849            Poem in Cambridge Chronicle
- 1850            The New Monthly Magazine
- 1850            Readings for Railways
- 1850            Lovers' Amazements in L.H.'s Journal
- 1850            Autobiography. 3 vols.
- 1850-51        Leigh Hunt's Journal
- 1851\*          Table Talk
- 1853            Religion of the Heart
- 1853            Readings for Railways. 2nd Series
- 1853-4        Articles in Musical Times
- 1853-4        Papers in Household Words
- 1855            Old Court Suburb
- 1855            Beaumont and Fletcher (selected)
- 1855            Stories in Verse
- 1857            Prose Works (America)
- 1857            Poetical Works (Boston)
- 1857            Article in National Magazine
- 1857            Article in Fraser's Magazine
- 1859            The Occasional in Spectator
- 1860            Poetical Works
- 1860\*          Autobiography (new edition)
- 1861            Saunter through West End
- 1862            Correspondence



- 1867 Book of the Sonnet
- 1869\* Tale for a Chimney Corner
- 1870 A Day by the Fire
- 1871\* Memoir of Shelley
- 1873 Wishing Cap Papers
- 1877 Favourite Poems
- 1877 Falstaff's Letters
- 1887\* Essays (Camelot Series) with intro. and notes  
by Arthur Symons
- 1889 Poems of Leigh Hunt and Thomas Hood
- 1889\* Leigh Hunt as Poet and Essayist (Selections) ed.  
by Charles Kent
- 1891\* Tales by Leigh Hunt, edited by Charles Knight
- 1891 The Poems of Leigh Hunt, ed. by R. B. Johnson
- 1891 Essays of Leigh Hunt, ed. by R. B. Johnson
- \* Essays and Sketches by Leigh Hunt, ed. by Johnson.  
(in World Classics, Oxford)
- 1893\* An Answer to the question "What Is Poetry?"
- 1894\* Dramatic Essays, ed. by Archer and Lowe
- 1902\* Old Court Suburb, ed. by Austin Dobson. London.
- 1903\* Essays with intro. notes by Symons, illustrated  
by H. M. Brock. Dutton
- 1909\* Selections in Prose and Verse, ed. J.H. Lobban
- 1916\* What is Poetry? (in "English Critical Essays of  
the XIX Century, ed. by E. D. Jones. Oxford)
- 1920\* Coleridge, Lamb and Leigh Hunt, Selections from  
their Prose and Poetry, with Introduction. Ed.  
by S. E. Winbolt





## ADDENDUM

Mr. Luther A. Brewer of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, has given to the present writer the rare privilege of examining unique Hunt items, and of obtaining from his collection information about Leigh Hunt not otherwise accessible. Undoubtedly Mr. Brewer has one of the finest and most complete Hunt libraries extant. Besides possessing a complete set of first and other interesting editions, he has a variety of presentation and association copies, many unpublished letters and manuscripts, proof sheets, and the original manuscripts of a number of Hunt's published works. I have Mr. Brewer's kind permission to list the following items from his interesting and unique collection.

## LETTERS

- Letters This is a group of twenty-seven letters written by Hunt to his wife while he was in prison.
- Letters There are fourteen letters in this bundle, written to him by his wife, and most of them while he was in prison. These prison-period letters are pathetic in character, disclosing the poverty of the Hunts. So far as Mr. Brewer can tell, they have never been published.
- Letters These letters, forty-six of them, were written by Hunt to Mrs. Hunt between 1803 and 1812.
- Letters Another bundle contains seventy-two letters from Hunt to his wife. These extend over a long period, beginning with 1825 and extending to 1852.



Letters This is a bundle of ten letters written by Hunt from Florence, Italy, to Bessie Kent, sister of Mrs. Hunt. These letters disclose his old love for Bessie, and contain several references to Mrs. Shelley, as well as to his English creditors and his longing to return to England.

Letters A group of original love letters from Hunt to his future wife, Marianne Kent.

### MANUSCRIPTS

The Palfrey. This is a complete manuscript of the poem, showing many corrections and proofs of Hunt's care in revising his work for the printer.

Book of Beginnings. This item is the original holograph of the "Book of Beginnings," first published in No. 3 of the "Liberal." This later manuscript differs materially from the printed book, and shows in a delightful way Hunt's method of work, and again proves how very carefully he performed it at times.

Italy This is a complete manuscript of a contribution to the third number of the "Liberal."

The Heir of Mondolfo. This is a manuscript of nine<sup>ty</sup>-three pages.

The Secret Marriage, afterwards The Prince's Marriage. Hunt explains in his "Autobiography" that this was a play in five acts which he had written, but which he had never published.<sup>1</sup>

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1. See Ingpen's edition of the "Autobiography," II:226-227.





Mr. Brewer's possession consists of many pages of transcript from the play, having many interliniations in the handwriting of Leigh Hunt.

The Friar's Tale. This is the manuscript of the modernized version of Chaucer's poem in the handwriting of Hunt.

Fragments This group consists of about five hundred pages of Hunt manuscript of a fragmentary character. Mr. Brewer has not yet classified this material.

#### ITEMS WITH ASSOCIATION INTEREST

Testimonial. This item consists of proof sheets of a testimonial promoted by Browning, Dickens and others for the erection of a monument in Kensal Green Cemetery to the memory of Hunt, with Robert Browning's autograph corrections, and a statement of the condition of the fund in Browning's autograph. This item is absolutely unique.

Harold Skimpole. Six autograph letters from Dickens to Hunt containing expressions of friendship and making pathetic reference to his alleged caricature of Hunt as Harold Skimpole in Bleak House; with two letters from Dickens to Thornton Hunt on the same matter.

Bacco in Toscana, by Redi. This is Leigh Hunt's copy of the Italian original of his "Bacchus in Tuscany." Many of the pages contain autograph notes and comments; and it is thought on that account to be the identical copy used by Hunt in making his translation of "Bacchus in Tuscany."

Bacchus in Tuscany. This is interesting because it bears through-



out the text many corrections in Hunt's autograph. These corrections are principally in the spelling of Italian names. Mr. Brewer believes that the necessity for so many corrections lies in the fact that the manuscript was put in type and the proof read by others than the author, and that it was not easy to decipher the unfamiliar Italian names and terms. In no other way can he explain the presence of so many corrections in the book after it was published.

Masque of Anarchy. This item consists of Hunt's page proofs of the first edition of Shelley's "Masque of Anarchy." In this first edition the Preface is contained on twenty-six pages, while in the proof sheets in Mr. Brewer's possession it is contained in eight pages. The beginning and the ending of the matter on these pages coincide with the beginning and ending in the First Edition, showing that Hunt must have called for additional page proofs to which he had made large additions in the way of copy. Mr. Brewer's proof sheets show forty-six pages of text instead of forty-seven as printed. This additional page was needed because Hunt had added a note to Stanza LXXXI.

The Cenci. This was Shelley's first attempt at writing drama, and contains the famous dedication to Hunt. The volume is accompanied with a letter from Shelley to Hunt asking about the receipt of the manuscript of the book.

The Old Court Suburb. With many pages of Hunt's manuscript copy.

Jar of Honey from Mount Hybla. With Hunt's manuscript notes of subjects for head and tail pieces.





The Book of the Seasons, by William Howitt. Contains the inscription:

"To Leigh Hunt from his affectionate wife M. A. Hunt."

Socrates out of his Senses. Inscribed as follows:

"To Leigh Hunt from Chas. Brown, 1821." Has many annotations by Leigh Hunt.

Poesie D'Alessandro Guidi, 1726. Inscribed by his son as follows:

"To dear papa from his loving son."

#### PRESENTATION COPIES

The Descent of Liberty. This is the First Edition, presented to

Lord Byron, with the following in Hunt's handwriting:

"To Lord Byron, with the author's best remembrances."

Accompanying this volume are eleven pages of manuscript covering pages 55 to the end, 28 pages of printed matter, and showing many changes and corrections. The manuscript was written in prison, and is dated July 10, 1814.

A Book for A Corner. Inscribed as follows:

"To the Rt. Hon. T. B. Macaulay, from his most obliged friend & servant, Leigh Hunt."

Christianism. This has the following inscription:

"To Isabella Grundy with the Author's kindest good wishes, April 16, 1853." This was published in 1832, in an edition of 75 copies only, and was edited by John Forster.

Hero and Leander, and Bacchus and Ariadne. This has the following

inscription to his old sweetheart:

"To Bessy Kent from her affectionate friend and Author."





Story of Rimini. Inscribed to his friend thus:

"To Horatio Smith, from his sincere friend Leigh Hunt."

Beaumont and Fletcher. This was edited by Leigh Hunt and inscribed

"To Isaac Latimer, with Hunt's kind regards," on title,  
and letter of Leigh Hunt that accompanied the presentation.

One wonders with Mr. Brewer how it has been possible to  
keep the book and the letter together all these years.

The Poetical Works of Leigh Hunt, 1832. Inscribed thus:

"To Aristides Guilbert with Leigh Hunt's respects and  
regards."

Legend of Florence, 1840. This was inscribed to an actor friend,

"Anderson Esqre with the Author's respects and thanks."

The Indicator and Companion, 2 vols., 1834.

"To Anna Maria Dashwood, from her affectionate friend  
the Author."

Wit and Humour. This is the Hunt item that holds first place in the  
Mr. Brewer's affection. In his little book entitled,  
"Around the Library Table," he gives a charming Huntian  
account of how it came into his possession. On the half-  
title, in the beautiful handwriting of the author, is the  
following inscription:

"To Mrs. Shelley

(I mean "Mary")

from her affectionate friend, L. H."





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